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MINISTERIAL LIFE AND WORK

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Preaching

MINISTERIAL LIFE AND WORK

BEING

A SECOND SERIES OF LECTURES ON PASTORAL THEOLOGY DELIVERED AT ALL THE SCOTTISH UNIVERSITIES

Under the Authority of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland

BY

JAMES STEWART WILSON, D.D.

AUTHOR OF "THE LIFE-EDUCATION AND WIDER CULTURE OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY"

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In Memoriam

J. E. W.

CONJUGIS

CARISSIMÆ AC DESIDERATISSIMÆ

Preface.

TWENTY years ago, by appointment of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, I delivered a course of Lectures on Pastoral Theology to her students of Theology at all the four Scottish Universities. These were afterwards published under the title of "The Life-Education and Wider Culture of the Christian Ministry."

My intercourse with the students was a source of much pleasure and profit to me, whilst the publication of the Lectures won for me not a few highly valued friends.

I have again been honoured by the General Assembly with the same commission, and look back with keen pleasure and gratitude upon the unfailing courtesy and hearty response of all who listened to my second course of lectures. I publish these in the hope that they may pleasantly remind those hearers who are now "scattered

abroad" of that happy intercourse, and, whilst maintaining the old, may awaken some fresh stirrings of kindly feeling towards the lecturer.

May I cherish the further and higher hope that they will, in however limited a field and in however slight a degree, help to raise the ideal and quicken the energy of the Christian ministry in our land?

New Abbey,
July 1901.

Contents

PAGE

FIRST LECTURE

Introduction—Origin, Nature, and Function of the Christian Ministry 11

SECOND LECTURE

The Demands made by this Ideal upon the Christian Minister, and his Response and Conformity to those Requirements 38

THIRD LECTURE

The Minister as a Preacher—Personal and other conditions of effective Preaching 67

FOURTH LECTURE

The Minister as conducting Public Worship, administering the Sacraments, and discharging other Sacred Functions 98

FIFTH LECTURE

The Minister as a Pastor—His Intercourse with his People, and his Work in the Parish and Congregation . 131

SIXTH LECTURE

The Minister in the larger world outside his Parish and People—In the Church Courts and among his brother Ministers—His relations to other Churches, and his duties to the whole Community—Conclusion 163

First Lecture

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

ITS ORIGIN AND FUNCTION

THE Church of Scotland has again honoured me with an invitation to deliver a course of Lectures on Pastoral Theology to those of her students at the four Universities who are preparing for the office of the Holy Ministry. She has not more particularly indicated the nature or limits of my commission, and so has left me ample liberty and large discretion in the choice and treatment of my theme.

Pastoral Theology is a very big, not to say a somewhat ambiguous, subject, and covers a vast and not very sharply defined field. I have therefore felt rather at a loss to determine from which of all the many sides to approach my task, and what choice to make among all the topics and the modes of dealing with them which offered themselves in such perplexing abundance. But still there were several weighty considerations which seemed to indicate one special course as preferable in itself, and as most likely to promote the practical objects which the Church had in view.

There is one subject upon which I ought to be able to speak with some measure of knowledge and authority. It is one, moreover, which, though it concerns you all very vitally, and sums up in itself most of the interests which control and mould your lives, yet lies outside the circle of your university studies, and has to do with a world and a life singularly different from that in which you find yourselves here. Even a little experience entitles a man to speak with confidence to him who has none. He who has often traversed a route, or dwelt many years in a land, may fairly be reckoned qualified to offer some guidance to a brother who has never travelled that way and never visited that region. And, when anyone returns from that journey and finds his way back from that country, there surely can be little presumption in his telling the friends at home, who are looking forward eagerly to treading in his footsteps, about the fortunes of the strange way, and about the features of the new country; while there certainly may be prudence, and even profit, in their listening to the story of his experiences.

And this exactly describes my purpose, and furnishes, too, the justification of my purpose. You are looking forward to reach, and take up your abode in, a world in which I have been living and moving for nearly forty years. Ever now and again you direct eager, anxious glances towards a position—with its duties and responsibilities, with its conditions and experiences—that you hope to

occupy some day, wondering how these will affect you, and how they may best be met.

Surely, then, I do not make any unreasonable demands upon your indulgence if I cherish the hope that you may listen with kindly interest, and some little benefit, while I address to you a few words of counsel, warning, encouragement, and exhortation, suggested not by books, but by the experiences of a pretty long and unspeakably happy ministerial life.

In doing so, I can promise you two things. *First*, I shall not treat my subject with academic severity or scientific formality. I shall deal with simple, practical questions in a simple, practical way. And, *secondly*, I shall not speak as if I could explore the whole field, or anticipate the experiences of every one who listens to me. I can touch land only here and there; and not merely do I recognise, but desire to impress strongly upon you, that in many respects you will probably find the ministerial life to be widely dissimilar from what I have found it, and the ministerial office associated with very different joys and sorrows, influences and results, both in kind and degree, from those which it has brought to me.

One possible misconception I must distinctly deprecate before I go further, and that is, the supposition that in anything I may commend or insist upon as essential or helpful to ministerial efficiency or success I am recounting what I myself have accomplished or attempted.

A very large part of any wisdom one ever learns

is purchased at the cost of many deplorable failures. The power or the right to advise or warn others is largely due to the memory of our own blunders and faults. I cannot pretend to have been habitually pursuing the route which I counsel you to follow, or consistently carrying out the policy which I now commend to you. But the conviction that it is the right way, and the wise policy has been brought home to me, if not by the benefits which attended their adoption, yet by the evil consequences which followed from their rejection or neglect. I am a learner like yourselves, and do not speak from any lofty height of personal superiority, but simply as a pioneer, a little way in advance, who would fain endow you in starting with the gains of his experiences, and so save you from the penalties of his mistakes.

All our subsequent thoughts and talk must be about the work and duties of *the Christian Ministry.* We must therefore begin by trying to gain a clear conception of the subject with which we propose to deal. It may not be needful, even if it were possible, to define everything here with mathematical precision. But, plainly, we must have before our mind's eye some vivid truthful picture of the ministerial office, and must form for ourselves some working theory of its origin, its sanctions, and its objects. Where did it come from? How did it arise? What place does it occupy, and what part does it play in the life of the world and in the training of men? What justification is there for its existence

and claims? What central idea does it embody? What are its impelling forces, its inspiring aims, its legitimate ambitions, and its prescribed field of action?

I have not time to deal with all these questions, but a very hasty sketch of what we may term the *genesis* of the Christian ministry—with the various stages of development through which it passed as it gradually adapted itself to its final place and work in the world, and the union within itself of the one unchanging spirit and purpose with wide and ceaseless modifications of method and outward form, may supply a skeleton or rough draft sufficient for our present purpose.

Going away back, then, in search of the forces which first generated the Christian ministry, we find them, I think, in what I may term three absolute necessities.

There is, *first of all*, the need of the love and mercy that are in the heart of God, to go out and express themselves towards man.

Secondly, the need that is in the heart and soul of man to seek and find relief and peace in God.

And, *thirdly*, the need for a means being devised and a channel being formed by which the overflowing streams of life and healing may be conveyed from their source in God to their sphere of action in the nature and life of man.

The first, the only perfect satisfaction of all those three great unchanging essential needs, is in

the Incarnation, Life, and Work on earth of Jesus Christ. That fact of the Word of God becoming flesh and dwelling among men — wearing our human form and sharing our human nature — touching both God and man at once, and so bridging over the gulf which separated the two, is the first, the complete divine solution of this irrepressible problem. In that person, in that life, in that death, in the revelation therein made, in the movements thereby originated, in the methods then adopted, we have the fountain-head, the archetype, the perfect pattern, and divine sanction of all that seeks embodiment and struggles for expression in the Christian ministry.

And it is deeply interesting to watch how, when this light had once been kindled, it steadily transmitted and diffused itself; how this movement, once set agoing, seemed by an inner necessity to perpetuate and extend its action.

There was a divine energy in it that could not remain passive or quiescent, but must respond to the imperative calls, and must follow the irresistible impulses which sounded and stirred within it.

The spirit of Christ, whenever it took possession of a man, forthwith proceeded to draw that man into the circle of Christ's immediate personal influence, and to convert him into an agent for the reproduction of Christ's action, and for the prosecution of Christ's work. The lamps, kindled at the central original flame, became luminous, and shed their borrowed light on all around. The streams, fed from the divine fountain-head

flowed out on every side, bearing within themselves the qualities and communicating the influences which they acquired at their source. Each true believer in and real follower of Christ became in his turn and according to his capacity a centre of the life and a channel of the forces which he had found in Christ. Every man and woman who had touched Christ, and whom Christ had touched, felt impelled, under the quickening impulses of the Holy Spirit, and along the lines of his natural endowment and acquired facilities, to take up his place and play his part in the wide field of Christ's operations, and in the varied work Christ had begun and still directed. One man had one gift and implement, one capital of power and influence; another had another—widely differing, it might be, both in kind and degree. But none of them had rest or peace until they had brought their gift into the treasury and storehouse of Christ—until they had consecrated it to Christ's cause, and found for it its rightful place and noblest use in Christ's service.

As soon as Andrew had found Christ, he must needs go in search of Peter, and bring his brother to Jesus. As soon as Christ had found Philip there can be no repose for Philip until he has made his friend Nathaniel a partner in his new happiness and hopes.

Here, then, we have reached and taken note of the first and innermost of the grand, unending series of those concentric circles which, having their origin and centre in Jesus, spread gradually

and unceasingly outwards, owning ever the impulses and carrying with them ever farther and wider the movements and influences which have their source, their trend, their impelling forces in Christ.

So far, the movement is all purely spontaneous, personal, free, and unregulated, save by the spirit which prompts and guides it; by the vital union with the Saviour which inspires and sustains it; by the capacity and circumstances which determine its mode and sphere of action. It is what we may call the primitive stage of the volunteer combatant and of the amateur worker. It is the young spring-time when life is stirring mightily in every nature, and the need of guidance and control is not yet felt or owned.

But the recognition of this need for training and direction begins to emerge and express itself at a very early period. Out of the multitude of His disciples, Christ deliberately selects twelve, and henceforth devotes much of His time and energy to the special training and instruction of these chosen few. And again, at a later period, He picks out and sends forth other seventy into the regions beyond His own personal activity, with specific directions as to where they were to work, what they should say and do, and what aims and spirit should animate and control them in all their dealings.

Here, then, we have the faint beginnings and first elements of *an organised trained agency* for the extension of Christ's work, and for the diffusion of Christ's forces and influences. There are tokens

here of a distinct advance. There is the promise of still further changes and new developments away in the far-off future. We have here germs of ideas and of efforts which have slowly unfolded themselves, and gradually led on to the state of things which we see around us to-day.

And from this point we can see steadily evolving before our eyes the outlines and elements of that organised system, and of that orderly provision for carrying out God's purposes and supplying man's needs, which includes the institution of the *Christian Church* and *the office of the Christian ministry.*

It does not come all at once. Nothing permanent and vital ever does. There is no violent break in the continuity of the development. It is a case of the working of that divine law which guides a movement through the successive stages of the blade, the ear, and the full corn in the ear. Individuals grow into families, families multiply into communities, and Christian communities develop the needs and powers of Christian churches. The ever-widening range of Christian activity and the ever-growing complexities of Christian life awaken and quicken the sense of need for new agencies and appliances, for a more highly organised society, for a more elaborately regulated system of offices and disposition of forces. And so, in this way, step by step there silently arose and slowly grew into shape the institution, with all its agents and instruments and forms of activity, which men call *the Church.*

We have here, you will observe, reached a stage farther removed from the personal touch of Jesus. We have arrived at a time now in which the voice of inspiration is hushed and the controlling hand of the apostles is withdrawn. We have come to an age in which the human element and the natural ordinary apparatus bulk more largely and tend to obscure somewhat the divine elements and supernatural forces that do not cease to move and stir beneath.

But if we are farther away from *Jesus*, we are still as near the *Christ*. If the Holy Spirit does not manifest His indwelling presence and working in conspicuous miraculous gifts and inspired utterances, He still no less truly directs the movements of the Christian life, and still "takes of Christ, and shows it" to those who are carrying on Christ's work.

And though that work is now being carried on upon lower planes and with less heroic instruments, yet its aims and conditions and sustaining powers are still essentially the same. In the institution of the Christian Church there may be only too apparent the limitations, the imperfection of instruments, and the contrast between the inner spirit and the outer form which are inseparable from all things human. But its Divine Lord and Founder —the Church's Head and Archetype—Himself submitted to those limitations, contended with those difficulties, and carried on His work through the defective instruments of human speech and fallible agents. The leaders and members of the

Church may manifest in their language and in their acts at times a very partial penetration with the impulses and influences of the Holy Spirit. They may betray only too glaringly the presence and pressure of forces not purely divine. But neither did the indwelling of the Holy Spirit save even the apostles from kindred imperfections,—did not free the Apostolic Church from the working of that same human leaven,—did not prevent the impairing of its beauty through the development of similar defects.

It is the living Christ who still presides over and directs His Church. It is the same Holy Spirit that fell upon Peter and John at Pentecost which still conveys light and life from Christ to His Church, and which still guides her efforts and movements in the heaven-appointed channels. The connection between the Church, on the one hand, and her divine Head or her divine medium of inspiration, on the other, may not be so evident now as in those old and early times; but it is not one whit the less real. Though the divine and human elements that must ever coexist and co-operate in every system and movement seeking to work out the will of God upon earth may seem to have changed places, and the heavenly to have paled somewhat before the earthly, yet both tides are still flowing side by side, or, rather, are blending harmoniously, in the new as they did in the old. The love and mercy of God still yearn as passionately to discharge their healing streams and vitalising waters upon the blighted

energies of human nature and upon the barren fields of human life.

The world and its inhabitants and all their complexities pine and languish, and, whether consciously or unconsciously, cry out for the living God. And the everlasting necessity and demand for a meeting-point between the two, and for the establishment of channels that will help to convey the divine fulness to the human emptiness is quite as urgent and imperative as ever. There never can be a land or a time in which the divine goodness and wisdom will not find out a solution and provide a means of meeting and satisfying this want.

We note with admiration and thankfulness that inspiration carefully refrains from prescribing any immutable pattern, or sanctioning any stereotyped form of ecclesiastical constitution or operation. On the contrary, the amplest mobility of form and the largest freedom of self-adaptation have been accorded to the Church which represents Christ and is commissioned to carry out His saving work upon earth. The Church has been expressly invested with the authority and burdened with the duty of constructing and reconstructing its framework—of regulating and changing its methods and agencies—of fixing and modifying its offices and officers as may best express the mind of its Divine Founder, and as may most effectually meet the local or temporary requirements with which it has to deal.

Still, in all the Spirit's teaching and leading of

the Church on this large open field, and along those widely diversified paths, we can see the careful maintenance and strong accentuation of *two great sacred principles. The one* is the reconciliation of the responsibility and consecration of the individual Christian with the subordination of offices and the distinction of formal duties involved in any organised system like the Church; and *the other* is the harmonious union in the same Church of the two elements and factors which invariably meet in it and which determine its nature and action — the twofold aspect it wears, as in its essence deriving its life and authority from God, and yet in its outward features deriving its sanctions from the Christian community and from the warrant of Christian men.

In this way we have two great objects secured and two great dangers averted. The rights and duties of the individual conscience are carefully safeguarded, whilst the corrupting influences of sacerdotalism and ecclesiastical domination are kept at bay. And again, on the other hand, the bond of union between the Church and God is brought into clear relief, while minister and people are preserved from the evils which follow upon their forgetting their right relations to one another. It may be well to work out those two companion truths a little more in detail.

The priestly character of each Christian man and woman, and the complete consecration of the entire Christian life, are truths strongly enforced

in Scripture and clearly embodied both in the theory and practice of our Church. God claims the time, the energy, the powers of everyone who knows His love and calls Jesus Christ his Lord and Master. There is no vital distinction in the extent of the claim or in the completeness of the devotion. Ths king and the beggar, the statesman and the merchant, the housewife and the domestic servant, have all the same sacred duty and the same invaluable privilege of consecrating all that they have and all that they are to the service of Christ. But this does not in any way hinder the Christian community from singling out a few who are naturally fitted and specially trained, and assigning to them the special care and express guardianship of duties and interests that are the common heritage and trust of all. Indeed the very depth and strength of their conviction as to the dignity of this universal consecration, and as to the necessity of keeping God's claims before all men's minds, have prompted and led to this specific provision. The selection and appointment of a special body of men to give themselves wholly and unceasingly to Christian work and duties that belong to all, but which run the risk of being thrust aside and neglected in the strong press of other interests, is not meant to weaken, but rather to keep alive and strengthen, the sense of our universal priesthood. The minister has not an intrinsic character, or sacred obligations, or hallowed privileges essentially different from those of the other members of the Church.

He merely embodies and concentrates in himself the dignities and responsibilities and functions that are shared by the whole community. He is the representative or delegate of that community in holy things,—that so, by his complete release from other ties and his complete devotion to the interests of religion, those interests may be more carefully guarded and more effectually promoted among them all.

The practice as well as the theory of our Church has always been that each of her ministers should not merely recognise the call of God, but should wait upon the spontaneous and hearty call of the Christian people, guided and controlled by the collective wisdom and regulative authority of the Church. In this way the minister is kept in mind of the double nature of his office, and of his twofold duty and responsibility as an official. He is reminded of his relation both to God and man, and of the special honour and obligation that are laid upon him of standing in closest communication with both, and directing his efforts to maintaining the intercourse between the two. In short, he, in his poor measure and imperfect degree, so far meets the *third head* of which I spoke, by acting as an interpreter and living bond between God and man.

He stands in the pulpit; he takes his place at the communion table; he carries on his pastoral work in the parish; he discharges all his sacred functions as the representative of God, and as messenger from God to man. But he also acts

in all these as the chosen, accredited representative of the people,—as leading their devotions, embodying their aspirations, expressing their spiritual desires, and directing their spiritual forces. He is honoured with Christ's commission. But he is also clothed with his Christian people's priestly garments, invested with their dignity, and burdened with their obligations. He is called of God, and so stands before men as the ambassador of God. But he is also called of men, and so stands before God as the representative of men. He brings from heaven a Divine message of comfort, warning, exhortation, and love. He also gathers up and lays before God the message of human penitence, longing, hopes, and fears. God speaks to men through him, and they in turn, through his words and acts of worship and self-denying efforts, speak and hold converse with God.

Ministers are not priests—separate from and far uplifted above the unordained follower of Christ; exclusive depositaries and channels of divine grace; or wielders of a secret magic power by virtue of their formal consecration. They are, indeed, the officers of the Church which, in prescribing their training, in superintending their intellectual and religious preparation, in testing their moral and spiritual qualifications, and, in laying down the lines on which they shall afterwards teach and work, express the mind and exercise the authority of Christ. But they are, what their name of glorious humility declares

them to be, *servants*—servants of Jesus Christ for the redemption and welfare of men, and servants of men for the sake and in the interests of Christ. As such they are not in any narrow or conventional, but in a widely practical and truly spiritual sense, direct and legitimate representatives and successors of the original leaders and office-bearers of the Christian Church and of the primitive officers of the Christian army. We serve the same Master. We bear the same commission. We act as heralds to the same world. We preach the same gospel. We use the same means and wield the same instruments. We own our dependence upon the same Spirit. We are owned and recognised by the same body of believers. In this only real and desirable sense we can boast of a genuine apostolical succession.

Any serious study of the workings of the Christian Church brings us face to face with two startlingly contrasted yet inseparable features. Any careful analysis of the *personnel* and composition of the Christian ministry discloses the coexistence and combination in that office of two seemingly discordant yet mutually indispensable elements.

It has communings both with heaven above and with earth beneath. The temporal and eternal, the natural and supernatural, meet and blend and work side by side in it. The visible body and perishable framework are human. The indwelling soul and quickening spirit are divine. In its outward aspects, its limits of action, its modes of working, it is, to a large extent, the product of natural forces

and temporary drifts of tendency. But, in its essence, in the source from which it springs, in the goals to which it moves, and the spirit in which it seeks to cover and traverse the interval, it is no mere resultant of transitory ordinary forces, but the creation and institution of God. It has, indeed, been gradually evolved out of the elements of human fears and needs, and built up out of the simple materials of human speech, thought, and agencies. But in all this we recognise the moulding, controlling hand of Him who created it so as to fulfil His purpose, and fashioned it so that it should adequately fill its appointed place.

This twofold aspect, then—this double nature of the Church and of her office-bearers—is not a blemish or a defect. Neither is it merely the necessary condition and unavoidable consequence of her position and work. It is more than that. It is the evidence of her fitness for her great function in meeting the *third* of the imperative needs we have indicated that clamour for satisfaction, viz. a means of maintaining and facilitating intercourse between heaven and earth, a link, a channel, a bond of union between God and man. It is therefore a note of distinction and a mark of providential efficiency.

And here, too, I think, we may find the right starting-place in our search after the *character*, *the duties*, and *the operations* of the Christian ministry.

On the one hand the divine origin and sanctions of that ministry furnish the key to the right inter-

pretation of some of the most important questions which meet us in that field.

That fact, for instance, invests the ministry with a *dignity*, and burdens it with a *responsibility*, which it would be difficult to exaggerate, indeed hopeless to realise and unfold.

You cannot rate too high the lustre of a position or the importance of functions that have Jesus Christ for their founder, the Holy Ghost as their living inspiration, and that were inaugurated by apostles and holy men of old. One thinks, and rightly thinks, with awe and reverence of the relations in which a Moses or an Elijah stood to Jehovah. One feels what a mighty impulse and solemn sense of consecration it must have communicated to Peter or John or Paul to receive direct from their Divine Master the commission which bound them indissolubly to the work of their life. But though the Christian minister nowadays may not tremble before the visible presence of God, or feel haunted and spurred on by the remembrance of the Master's look and tone, I do not think that his assurance of a divine commission need be a whit less confident and strong. The vows of special Christian service and consecration are upon him. The Cross of Christ beckons unceasingly to him. The appeal of Him who is eagerly watching the fortunes of the field and the bearing of every individual officer and soldier is sounding in his ears.

And the same thought, too, brings us into the point of view from which we can clearly see and rightly appreciate *the comforts and supports*, the joys

and sustaining influences, of the Christian ministry. If a man be a true minister or servant of Christ, he need have no painful disquietude about the strength and means to do his work, or as to the efficacy of the forces brought into play. God does not send any man into His field to fight at his own charges. Christ assured His messengers of His continued presence and help. The instrument may be weak and imperfect enough, but it is the hand of Almighty power that wields it. The agent may have but little light or vigour in himself, but the Spirit which dwells within him directs all with unerring accuracy, and converts even weakness into strength. For the prescribed means and appointed agencies we need have no fear. We may use them without misgiving or doubt. It is still in our day as it was long ago in the land of Israel and in the time of Christ. The water of Siloam, the clay spread upon the blind eyes, the fingers put into the deaf ears, had no virtue of their own, yet they sufficed to convey the healing power of Christ. Our natures and our appliances are poor enough in themselves, but they can be made to transmit and apply forces of divine efficacy.

And now, turn to *the other side*, and to the opposite pole of our subject, and there you will find truths and discover aspects that fill up and enlarge, if they do not complete, our conception of the Christian ministry. It has its source in God, but it has its end and field of action among men. On the one side stand the mercy and saving power of God; on the other side lie the clamant want

and pitiful misery of humanity. The compassion of the divine heart appeals to that of His servant; the might of the divine impulse to save urges him on; and at the same time the spectacle of the world's need pleads with him, and the cry of the world for God rises with piercing intensity into his ears. Even the Son of God, who united in Himself all the heavenly impulses, powers, and forces which generated and still live and pulsate in the Christian ministry, had to assume the robe of humanity, carry on His work on earth, study the maladies of life, and deal as a man with the wants and miseries of man. All husbandry implies, not merely the action of the sun which shines and of the rain which falls from heaven, but presupposes and takes into account the needs of the earth, the properties of the soil, and the faithful, intelligent labour of man. And just in the same way, whilst God sends the spiritual husbandman into His field, commits to his hands the heavenly seed, and supplies the conditions of success, it is yet, after all, in the field of the world that he must labour and sow—it is with human nature, and the laws of that nature, he must deal. The healing agencies may owe all their existence and qualities to God, but they must adapt themselves to the needs and circumstances of the patient, and conform themselves to the conditions of the sphere and material in which they work. And so, in a certain very real sense, we may truly say that life in its problems, and humanity in its needs, have created and still are in large measure the

rulers, and inspiring force of the Christian Ministry.

And now, having realised where we stand and who are our masters, we are in a position to understand—at least, partially—what duties and efforts our position imposes upon us. The Christian minister receives of God that he may convey and impart what he receives to man. He fosters the longings and guides the quests of man that he may direct them all to their true home in God. He seeks to awaken and gather around himself into a compact disciplined body all the scattered elements of aspiration and self-distrust and longing after God. He represents the love, the purpose and the saving efforts of God. He represents, too, the spiritual hunger, the hopes, the gropings of humanity.

I think we may shortly classify his duties and responsibilities *under three heads*:—

I. *Man is in darkness, and needs light* as to the nature of God, the meaning of life, the hopes and destinies of humanity. God has given the light and made the revelation needed; and the minister of Christ has to bear this light and make known this revelation.

II. *The field of human life is parched and barren* —the nature of man is plague-stricken and tainted. God has opened up a fountain of living, healing, life-giving waters; and the task of the minister of Christ is to guide these by the heaven-appointed

channels, and act himself as a living channel from the spring whence they flow to the hearts and souls, to the homes and scenes, where they are so sorely needed, and where they can work so mighty and blessed a change.

III. *There is a kingdom of light and life*, and a kingdom of darkness and death in this world—in conflict with each other, and each striving ever for the mastery. God has sent His Son into the world to combat the forces of darkness and destroy the works of the Evil One ; and the minister of Christ has to act personally as a rallying point for those who are on Christ's side, and marshal, train, and lead on the forces for good that are weak and scattered abroad.

I do not suggest this as anything approaching either a scientific or exhaustive analysis of the ministerial duties and functions ; but perhaps it may serve my practical purpose quite as well as one more formal and complete. Under one or other of those three aspects of the ministry regarding which I have to speak to you, you may range nearly every one of the tasks you must grapple with, and of the responsibilities you must bear. You will note that this division of the fold very nearly, if not exactly, coincides with the division of the minister's work and modes of operation into the various headings of—

I. *The Minister as Teacher and Preacher.* The minister in the pulpit or on the platform.

II. *The Minister as Pastor or Personal Shepherd of souls.* The minister in his personal dealings with his flock; and

III. *The Minister as Officer of the Church,* as exercising rule and guarding divine interests in his parish, in the nation, or in the world at large; the minister employing generally the authority and powers which his Heavenly Master has bestowed, and which Christ's representative on earth, the Church, has recognised, for the glory of God and for the good of men.

I offer this as a fairly accurate and exceedingly simple account of what is involved in the idea and mission of the Christian ministry. I do not engage to confine myself slavishly to this in tracing out the ministerial lines and fields. Things will overlap and insensibly melt into one another. It is only in books or in theories that there is any clear-cut, rigid boundary line. But, upon the whole, I shall follow the division thus generally indicated.

But before we bring these general remarks to a close, and proceed to the more detailed consideration of our subject, there is another element that must be adverted to, however briefly. We have been speaking of the Christian minister as accredited by the Church and as carrying on his work in the world and among men. But, at the same time, every minister is the official of some

particular branch of Christ's Catholic Church, and exercises his functions in some special land and in the interests of some special community. And though this fact will not change the essential nature or intrinsic quality of his aim and action, it will largely modify his special difficulties, helps, and modes of working. It must therefore be taken into account and duly recognised in anything like a complete and faithful representation of a minister's position and duties.

In our special case there are *two circumstances* to be noted and reckoned with. One is that you and I are, or look forward to being some day, ministers of the ancient *Presbyterian* Church of Scotland; and the other is that our sphere of action is or will be in a *national* Church, as the servants and officers of the *Scottish nation* under the headship of Christ and for the highest interests of the people.

I am not going to enter either here or elsewhere upon any controversial matter or debateable ground. I am not going to say a word on the merits of Presbyterianism or of Establishment, or of the possible defects of other competing systems. I speak to those who presumably have duly considered these questions and have fairly made up their minds. I am speaking, at anyrate, to those who will be ministers of the National Presbyterian Church of Scotland, and who, for the most part, will preach and teach and fulfil the work of the holy ministry in some parish of Scotland and to some community of Scotchmen

Now, without entering into particulars or anticipating what I may have to say at a later stage, it is plain that here we have something which must needs introduce fresh and very important elements into the problem. It must make a considerable difference whether we are officers in a *Presbyterian Church* in contradistinction to any other kind. The genius, the *ethos*, and framework of such a Church are markedly different from those of other Churches. They impose a different way of working, and tend to generate a distinct type of worker and of work. Each Church has helps and hindrances peculiarly its own. And so the system must so far affect the action, and leave its mark upon the character and products of the agent.

And as for the *National Scottish Church*, it has also a very peculiar history, and very strongly marked features and streams of tendency. The "*perfervidum ingenium Scotorum*" burns with concentrated intensity in "the Kirk." And whatever else its alliance with the State has brought to the Church, the very consciousness that the Church represents the national conscience, embodies a nation's sense of the need and blessings of religion, and is entrusted with the conduct of a Christian nation's campaign against evil, and in behalf of God, must appeal to every heart and imagination with vivid, impressive power. Where God and humanity are always speaking and powerfully exercising their spell upon the spirit and work of the Christian minister, the land in which we dwell and the Scottish Church we serve

cannot fail to let their voices be heard and their influences be felt.

And now we have very imperfectly and somewhat discursively set before you the nature and claims of the Christian ministry. In *my next lecture* I propose shifting the point of view round to the opposite side, and considering what demands all these make upon the minister. How he must try to meet them, and what are the necessary conditions of fitness for the efficient, faithful discharge of the duties which these impose. In it the subject, I am glad to think, will admit of our coming to closer quarters and of our dealing with it in a more direct and simple way.

Second Lecture

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER

ESSENTIAL FEATURES

THE worker must in every case adapt himself to the needs and conditions of his work. When once we know the nature and demands of any office, we are then in a position to understand aright what must be the qualifications and duties of him who would worthily and efficiently fill that office. The one determines the other. The one supplies the mould; the other must adapt itself to the lines and take the shape of that mould.

The Christian minister is one who takes a place and plays his part in the Christian ministry, and so must in some measure respond to the ideals and fulfil the conditions of that institution. Having gained, then, some conception of the nature and purposes, the sphere and scope of the ministry of Christ's Church upon earth, we are now able to say, with some degree of confidence, what manner of man each one of those who undertake those duties and responsibilities ought to be. That is *the subject* I propose to deal with to-day, and

I need hardly say that it is one of supreme moment and of vital interest—especially to *you*. It will be a dreadful thing, both for you and for the Church you profess to serve, if you make a mistake in this matter, and, misunderstanding the nature of your life's work or of the demands which that work makes upon you, you find yourselves committed to a position where you have no right to be, or chained to duties and responsibilities for which you have little caring and no fitness. I cannot conceive of anything more fatal to the vitality and more hurtful to the efficiency of any Church than that it should be officered and led by incapable and indifferent leaders; that its movements and operations should be directed by men who do not understand their work and are out of sympathy with their cause. If those that determine the policy and feed the fire of life and zeal in the Church find themselves working in a sphere uncongenial and strange, doubting all the while as to the efficacy of their methods or the value of their ends, how can we expect anything but dire confusion and utter listlessness in the minds and hearts of the rank and file?

There can be no more ghastly spectacle, or surer preparation for appalling disasters to any Church, than men who have mistaken their vocation and wandered by some unhappy mischance into the office of the holy ministry; helplessly and mechanically discharging functions that do not reveal their own meaning, or moving sadly

and irresolutely in a world where they are not at home; drifting aimlessly and hopelessly in an unknown sea without anchor, compass, or chart.

Even a small proportion of such cases must lower the whole tone and wreck much of the work of any Church. One does not like to compute how much failure, suffering, and calamity in this world has been the bitter fruit of incapable leaders, incompetent physicians, unskilful steersmen, or ignorant, reckless guides. But these deplorable results have been in things earthly, and so can be measured by the standards of human joy or sorrow. But, in the interests affected and determined by the spirit and aims, by the action and influence of the minister, who is their inspiring heart and guiding hand, there is no limit to the mischief save that which is set by eternity and the destinies of an immortal soul.

And I am not sure but that the consequences to the man himself are not even sadder and more disastrous still. Suppose that he does awake when it is too late to the fact that he has irretrievably committed himself to a career which fails to supply a congenial atmosphere, to awaken perfect sympathies, or to kindle strong enthusiasm. In that case the man must feel out of touch with all his surroundings, and must continue to occupy that most painful and fatal of all positions—of one tied to a work that he does not understand, for which he does not care, —in which, indeed, he does not wholly believe. It

will be very strange if such a false position and its jarring influences do not end in destroying all the inner light and spring—in driving all the truth and self-respect out of the man.

Or suppose, on the other hand, that the minister, who has stumbled by some sad mistake into the sanctuary, and spends his life in the holy place, never awakes at all to the sacred character of the spot in which he finds himself, but serves and carries on the dread functions of his priesthood there without the least inkling of their real nature or of the horrible incongruity between his mechanical activities and the solemn realities with which these ignorantly and listlessly deal. In that case the very insensibility may, no doubt, save his heart from much sorrow, and may deliver his nature from much of the bitter consciousness of disloyalty to the truth. But the deliverance from these keener pangs and from that more withering self-contempt is earned at a terrible price. If we have to purchase exemption from those pains by utter indifference to all the higher claims and loftier aspirations of consecration to Christ's service, and by submitting to act as dead weights and hindrances in the blessed work of the Master, it is certainly a dread and melancholy alternative. I can hardly say which is preferable; the remedy or the disease.

It is only by a clear conception and a firm grasp of what a grand field for the very noblest work the Christian ministry supplies—what rich materials and strong incentives for the very fullest life and

most satisfying career it provides—what demands for devotion and self-consecration, and, at the same time, what sure and inexhaustible fountains of strength and joy and glad impulse abound there,—that the young minister will be fitted to open the door reverently, take his place eagerly, play his part efficiently, and find there an ample response to all his hopes and longings, a fitting sphere for all his energies and efforts. And as the worker will then be more enlightened and in truer harmony with his work, and, in the same degree, happier and stronger, so the work too will profit thereby, and the Church will benefit by the more devoted, more whole-hearted, and more intelligent service.

All this sounds like an old, familiar commonplace, and certainly ought to rank among the well-known truisms that need to be repeated and enforced continually only because they are continually forgotten and habitually neglected. And now or never is the time to press it upon you with all the earnestness of which I am capable. Now is the time for you to pause and reckon honestly and faithfully with yourselves and with the facts. When you are once inside, and have fairly committed yourselves, it is then too late to consider where you have come, what awaits you, what harmony or discord there is between you and your surroundings. Besides, the whole course of your preparation must be determined by your conception of what a minister ought to be. Nay, the very question whether you are to continue that course, and whether you are ever to do anything for God or

man in the field to which you look, depends upon the answer to this inquiry.

It is generally a great deal easier to say distinctly what a thing ought not to be than to make quite clear what it really and essentially is. Yet it sometimes helps to dispel dangerous misconceptions, and render just conceptions more distinct, if we first of all distinguish and separate the genuine article from some of the plausible counterfeits which are most apt to be mistaken and pass current for the true.

Well, in the present case, there are some things which from that point of view must be said—which, indeed, cannot be said too emphatically, and which one can affirm with perfect confidence and certainty. There may be—indeed, there must be—an infinite variety in the routes by which men may legitimately approach the work of the Christian ministry, as well as in the gifts and activities by which they may help on that work. But there are *some* paths by which no man may lawfully approach it; and there are motives and aims, legitimate enough, it may be, elsewhere, which must be understood as hopelessly disqualifying a man for that office.

No one, *e.g.*, has any right to choose the ministry as the sphere of his life's work simply or mainly because of its worldly attractions, or of its appeal to any ambition or impulse lying outside his moral or spiritual nature. I do not say that such thoughts and motives as associate themselves with freedom of action, culture of mind, dignity of position, and hope of making one's influence felt in some of the

more conspicuous movements of the world must be rigidly excluded from the mind and heart of the would-be minister. These and kindred aspirations and dreams have their rightful place, and may play a useful subordinate part in the sum of complex forces which drive and attract to that sacred field. But there must be something over and above all these, something in its origin and in its aim essentially different from all these, moving and stirring in the nature of a man before he can enter upon the ministry with a good conscience, and before these lower subsidiary motives can find their right place and receive their necessary consecration. One must not ask or expect angelic perfection or heavenly simplicity of motive from those who are, after all, not angels, but very imperfect men. But though they may perhaps claim and find some not dishonourable niche in the Christian Church, and though they may do some good, useful work for God and man in some other sphere, yet those who do not set Christ and spiritual things first and foremost in their life's programme, and who do not seek and find in these the real worth and right destination of all the rest, should seek elsewhere than in the ministry a place to fill and a work to do.

It may be, or it may not be, a position that promises ease, social consideration, satisfaction of natural ambitions, and a platform for the display and exercise of popular gifts and powers. But if that is the only light in which it is regarded, or if these are the chief considerations which lead a man

to turn his face towards the Christian ministry and knock at its door, better far that he should keep aloof and turn another way. He cannot give the right watchword to Him who keeps the gate. He will not be found wearing the wedding garment when the Master enters and moves with searching glance among the guests. He is an intruder there. He will not find any true good in that region or labour, and the sphere will not be gladdened or blessed by his presence or influence.

So much for the counterfeit and the false; and now for the genuine and the true notes of a veritable minister of Christ, and for the legitimate animating forces of the Christian ministry.

These have often been summed up in the one phrase, "*An inward calling of the Holy Ghost to the special and official service of Jesus Christ.*" He who is thus undoubtedly and powerfully called is owned by the Master. He who is without that vocation is no true, acceptable servant of His.

Now there can be no doubt that such a way of putting it expresses a great and undeniable truth, and draws attention to a vital and never-to-be-forgotten fact. But though the phrase expresses a truth, and a truth of prime importance, yet there are at least two sufficient reasons why it will not suffice for the purpose of furnishing a satisfactory reply to our present inquiry or of supplying a reliable test as to the marks of a genuine or spurious minister of Christ.

One of these is that the divine calling no longer comes to men now, as it did to prophet or apostle of old, by audible voice or by outward visible sign. Moses, Isaiah, John, and Paul could not doubt for a moment as to the reality of their call from God, for it came to them in clear words and unmistakable form. But now all that has changed. The voice speaks from within—unheard by others—scarcely and doubtfully distinguishable at times even by those in whose inner ear it whispers its message. And so we can no longer appeal to it as a proof to others, or even as a ground of assurance for ourselves.

And the *other* is that not only is there a risk of our mistaking it—of our failing to take note of it when it does come, and of our imagining that it has spoken when it was, after all, only the echo of our own voice or the utterance of our own desire, —but there is something so unsubstantial and so vague about it that we still need to understand more fully and state more articulately what is contained and implied in the pregnant truth that every true, acceptable, successful minister of Christ must be "called by God."

In short, the great general principle must be analysed and reduced to its constituent elements. The ground it covers must be mapped out and the different parts discriminated and noted.

I think we may set forth the requirements of a Christian minister in a series of propositions, which, without professing to exhaust a subject that is really inexhaustible, will yet contain all

that is essential to the ministerial office and character, and will bring together all the indispensable duties, sources of vitality, lines of action, and secrets of efficiency which make up the true Scriptural idea of the ministerial life.

I. And, *first of all*, then, I say a Christian minister, or a candidate for the Christian ministry, must be himself a true Christian—a real, sincere, hearty believer in the great facts and truths, as well as in the divine origin and purpose of Christianity. This is no doubt implied in his being called a *Christian* minister. But this is not a matter that may be safely left to be supposed or implied. It must be plainly stated, distinctly understood, and vigorously pressed home. I do not imagine that any of you are likely to forget that no true and honest man can honourably carry or follow a flag that does not represent to him justice and truth, or can serve a cause in which he has no interest or belief. But undoubtedly there have been cases not a few in many a Church and in many an age in which the very standard-bearers have had scanty trust in the Cross which they bore, and where the titular messengers from God to men had but little caring for the message they delivered or for Him who sent it. And who shall measure or estimate the amount of injury, both to the unworthy representatives and to the cause they represented, inflicted by this ghastly want of harmony between the two? And so it is absolutely necessary to insist, at the very threshold, in the very strongest terms on this

first, this most vital, and utterly unchangeable condition.

The minister of Christ, I repeat, must himself be a firm, hearty, convinced believer in Christianity as the divine revelation of God's nature and will, as the embodiment of God's love and saving purposes towards sinful men, as unfolding the divine scheme of redemption through the death of Jesus Christ and the inward working of the Holy Spirit. He must see and recognise and unreservedly accept for himself, as well as for others, Jesus Christ as Divine Master, Saviour, Teacher, King, and the Blessed Spirit as the channel of all life and the medium of all grace. He must accept the Scriptures, and especially the Gospels, as given and inspired by God to disclose and teach all that it is needful for man to know regarding his duties here and his hopes hereafter. He must honestly and firmly believe that Christianity is not merely precious and venerable, but that it is the one perfect expression of the wisdom and love of God, and furnishes the one absolute law and final solution of all life's deepest problems. He must be firmly persuaded of this in his own mind, thankfully rejoice in this in his own heart, and unfeignedly welcome and submit to it as his own personal law and ground of hope.

II. But something more than this is required of him who would offer himself to the service of Christ and man in the holy ministry. The condition now laid down applies to all true Christians, and to all genuine followers of Christ alike. It is, indeed,

the test and the note of all real discipleship. You cannot enter the army at all, or serve even in the ranks, without this personal relation between you and Christ. But you here aspire to a higher position, and propose to undertake heavier responsibilities. You are not to be mere private soldiers in the army of Christ, but to be officers and leaders therein. You have not merely to follow, and to carry on your work for Christ within the narrow limits of your own personal life and private circle. You have to animate and direct others, and consecrate all your time and energies to the open public advancement of Christ's work. And so, as you can easily see, that demands special qualities and a higher degree of interest and enthusiasm. It was not merely decent-living, steady-going, average Christians of feeble pulse and low vitality whom Christ sought and selected for His ambassadors and evangelists, but men of strong faith, ardent love, intense energy and burning zeal, like Peter and Paul, and Stephen and John. And so it is still. Those who are to march in the van, who are to carry the flag, who are to direct the movement and stimulate the courage, must be picked men, men who believe more firmly, love more intensely, and experience mightier impulses than common to serve the Lord Christ.

We read in olden times of one servant of God feeling the passion for God's work "burning like a fire in his bones." And again we hear the voice of that inner force which gave Paul no rest, and made him such a famous captain for Christ, in that cry,

"Woe is me if I preach not the gospel." And something akin to this consuming passion, this inner necessity, must be reproduced in everyone who will ever do great things for Christ, and for his own soul in the office of the holy ministry.

You should in a manner be powerfully drawn, irresistibly driven, mightily impelled, lifted up, and swept on towards the ministry by a deep, full, if quiet and unruffled tide of longing to do, or at least attempt, something for the Saviour who gave His life for men, and for the good of those for whom that Saviour died. It is to special honour that they are called, and the special dignity implies special sacrifices and special readiness, and even eagerness to make and welcome the opportunities of self-sacrifice. As it has been truly and wittily said: "A man must not become a minister unless he can't help it." He must stand on a higher level of spiritual vitality and fervour than ordinary men. He must feel and own tides of feeling that move but languidly in other hearts. He must hear and eagerly respond to the call of a voice that is but faintly heard, and intermittently distinguished by other ears.

III. So far, we have been dealing with the aspect of the Christian ministry that is turned towards God. But there is another side, which looks towards and which touches upon human nature and human life. And this other relation also makes new and imperative demands upon the minister. He is the servant of Christ; but it is for the benefit of man. And there is, in consequence,

required of him a very clear perception and a very keen sense of the conditions of the problem with which he has thereby to deal. He must be a diligent, loving student of human nature. He must be well acquainted with its joys and sorrows, with its strength and weakness, with its heights and depths. And he must engage in that research, and deal with its results, not as a mere collector of statistics or accumulator of knowledge, but in the spirit of the tender physician who examines the frame, and who explores the seat and source of disease in order that he may handle his patient wisely, apply his remedies intelligently, and bring back health and strength to the sufferer. He must have a big heart to take in his brethren's need. He must have quick sympathy to bring him into and keep him in vital touch with every brother and sister. He must be ready to listen, and prompt to respond to their appeals, whether articulate or inarticulate.

Christ Himself looked out with eager yearning and tender pity upon the field of this world. He gathered the joys, and especially the sorrows, of men into His loving, sensitive heart. He watched and distinguished the maladies of humanity, tracing up the streams of bitterness to their source, and adapting His remedies to each case with patient, discriminating care. And what Christ was, each of His ministers, in his limited measure and on his lower level, ought to be. If he is to carry on and continue Christ's work, it must be with large knowledge of the world's ills and their causes, with keen

interest in the darker problems of life, and in the deeper troubles of mankind, with earnest desire and wistful longing to soothe all sorrow and bind up all wounds.

IV. The forces which the minister of Christ wields, and the commission which he holds, is from God. The field, however, on which he exercises these forces is human life, while the terms of his commission appoint him to carry God's message and convey God's remedies to his fellow-men. The minister is thus a heaven-appointed link between things visible and invisible —a bond of union and channel of intercourse between God and man. And so he must be in touch, and in constant vital touch, with both. If the connection is broken or even interrupted at either end, evidently the intercourse, so far as he is concerned, no longer exists, and his use ceases. He receives in order that he may communicate; and he can communicate only what he receives. And it is equally fatal to the efficiency and success of his mission, whether by failure in his relations with the Divine sources and forces, or by reason of some imperfection in his relations to his fellow-men, when the streams are blocked and the message perverted or intercepted.

And this holds equally true of him in either of his *two great leading functions*—whether he be regarded as delivering a message, presenting a revelation, making known a divine law and purpose,—or whether he act as a living bond of union between the seen and the unseen, as a channel

of impulse and life, as a transmitter of force and influence from God to man. In his former capacity —as a bearer of light, as a herald of truth, as an interpreter of God's will and saving purpose in Jesus Christ—the minister must evidently be in closest touch with the sources and fountains of light and truth in the words of Holy Scripture, in the life and teaching of Christ the Master, in the commentary supplied by history and experience, and in the guiding, illumining influences of the Holy Spirit. Even the man who seeks the truth merely for his own private edification, and desires to get light for his own private guidance, must seek and find it there. There is really no other source or unfailing treasure-house. And anyone who has to instruct and guide others as well as supply his own wants must never cease visiting these Divine fountain-heads and drawing water from those springs of wisdom and knowledge. But even when he has thus replenished his whole nature with the fulness that God has opened up and supplied in these deep wells and flowing fountains, he has accomplished only half his task. He has still to convey what his nature has thus received and has been able to appropriate to other minds and hearts and souls, and apply it to their enlightenment and guidance. And to do this effectually and with glad result, there will be urgent and constant need for thorough familiarity with the natures to be dealt with and with the wants that are to be met and supplied. Otherwise the streams will never reach the field they

were meant to water, and neither the form nor the substance of the message delivered will be adapted to the circumstances of those to whom it is given.

And the same thing holds good with equal force of *the other* companion function of the holy ministry. If a man is to fulfil that ministry by fitting himself to act as a living personal channel of impulses and tides of influence, or to transmit from God to man attractive and propelling forces, the first condition that must be fulfilled is that he establish and keep his own nature in constant vital communion with the divine source of all these in God, and so get charged and saturated with them that he in his turn becomes a secondary storehouse and new centre for others. But that latter becomes possible only through closest intercourse and most intimate fellowship. Mind must touch upon mind, heart upon heart, soul upon soul—pressing upon it, imparting momentum to it, and leaving its mark upon it. And all that implies warmest sympathy; unwearied, painstaking, ceaseless efforts; tender, brotherly relations to every brother man. Among the most indispensable qualifications of the servant of Christ is that, like his divine Master, he should be intensely human—not isolated from the kind at any point—but having the lines of communication from every member and point of the circle meeting and gathering to a point in his heart, readily and unfailingly responding to the various tides of feeling and movement that reach it.

Many a minister fails utterly in the work of his life because, having never gained or having lost touch with God, he has therefore no divine message and no spiritual power. The light was never kindled. The impulse was never communicated. The life and force and light were never in the man. But there has also been many a barren ministry because the man who served in that office lacked richness and freshness of nature; lacked sympathy with his fellow-men; lacked points of contact through which to transmit to man what he had derived from God. The last arch of the connecting bridge is injured or broken down. The band of sympathy by which he should have laid hold of humanity is awanting or paralysed.

V. In my former lecture I sought to bring into clear relief the strange union in the Christian ministry of a heavenly origin and a homely scene of action—of a divine agency at work and of a human instrument through whom it works. It is the combination of the two elements that constitutes the mystery, and that also furnishes the key to the mystery of the service of Christ. And there are two different yet closely related ways in which the consciousness of this fact will colour and influence the minister's thought and action. Each of the two elements in the ministry will have its counterpart in the mind and operation of the minister. On the one hand it is God's work—work assigned by God; work inspired and directed by God; work that fulfils the purpose and seeks the glory of God,

It is an organisation that embodies and perpetuates the restoring agencies of the Son of God, and that is permeated and vitalised by the Holy Spirit of God. One who knows and realises this truth must needs be deeply affected by it in his view and in his handling of such an office and work. It will impart to all his thoughts and relations to it a deep abiding feeling of awe and dignity, and, at the same time, of elevation and trust. He stands on holy ground. He holds a sacred commission. He works under dread sanctions. He deals with vital interests, and represents a heavenly King. The consecrating hand of Christ is upon him, and the strong constraint of the Holy Spirit is laid upon his heart. It is no doubt a dreadful thing to occupy such a position, and to feel that one cannot escape from the shadow of this fearful responsibility. But in any noble mind and generous nature it cannot fail to kindle grand enthusiasm and ardent devotion. It is an inspiring thought that a man has been honoured by the divine Master, invested with His commission, and sent forth in His name to occupy the most arduous posts and render the most vital services to the Saviour. That consciousness must tend to breathe a sense of distinction and elevation around the entire field of the ministerial life and action. And, remembering who it is whom he serves and what divine forces of love and power are working together with and within him, he cannot fail to work on in quiet confidence and in firm assurance of success. It is God's cause. Who can over-

estimate its nobility or rise to the level of its dignity? It is God's own work. Who can doubt as to its fortunes or despair of its ultimate triumph?

But, on the other hand, the cause is represented by men of feeble powers and scanty equipments. The work has to be done by agents whose light is very dim, whose life is very low, and whose strength is very small. It is carried on, too, amid very homely surroundings, and with very imperfect instruments. And the strange contrast between the two things—the disproportion between the divine grandeur of the work to be done and the sad limitations of those who are called and privileged to do it—must awaken a keen sense of unworthiness and weakness and unfitness. The two feelings may seem incompatible and mutually destructive of one another; but in very truth they are closely related, and, indeed, inseparably connected. They are the impressions left upon the mind and heart by the contemplation of the very same facts—only regarded from different points of view, just as height and depth measure the same space from below or above.

You will never feel rightly humbled and abased at your own insufficiency and shortcomings until you have caught some glimpse of the towering summits of responsibility and privilege which beckon to you from above, while all the time you abide on the poor dark fields below. You will never feel your need to walk softly and cry for forgiveness until you have stood face to face and seen with

clear and open eyes what it is that the Divine Master has intrusted to your charge and summoned you to do. The poverty, the many sad and deplorable deficiencies of your work and service must be measured from the lofty heights of your divine calling and ideals. And it is equally true that you will never discover the secret of unwearied strength and unquenchable assurance so fully as when you turn from the manifest insufficiency of all the human agents and instruments to the divine energy and irresistible power that work through these.

Let a man look to himself, and let him consider what scanty resources and feeble strength he brings to a task of tremendous magnitude and difficulty, and the result will be a feeling of deepest abasement and self-distrust. Let him turn from himself and direct his thoughts to Him who created and still inspires the movement—to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and forthwith the thought of Him who sends out His messengers will dispel all hesitation and banish all fear. Let the self-knowledge chasten the confidence, and let the impulse from above combat the shrinking that arises from within; and so the servant of Christ will find himself in the right spirit and attitude for approaching and carrying out the work of his consecrated life.

VI. There is still another lesson forcibly brought home to us by our survey of the nature and operations of the Christian ministry; and that is the urgent need, nay, the absolute necessity, for healthy

vitality and fresh personal life on the part of the minister.

There is no peril in all the ministerial life greater than that of *professionalism*. The minister labours constantly under the strong and insidious tendency to let the movements continue while the nature has gone to sleep—to speak words, not because he thereby feels their truth, but because he has to say something; to spend his life in activities that have lost for him much of their significance. The words and the actions seem much the same, whether they express a real feeling or no. And as they are all dealing with things that are in themselves solemn and sacred, they wear a sacred aspect and contract something of a meritorious character. There is the regular routine of preaching, praying, visiting the sick, administering the sacraments, and treating of holy subjects. At first, probably, the whole man is awake, and every sermon, every pastoral act, every public function, embodies a certain amount of genuine emotion and personal effort. But as the process goes on the personal element tends to grow less and less, the movement continues without any conscious direction, until at last the man himself is lost in the conventional mechanism of his outward life. Outward observers may detect but little difference. The same truths are proclaimed. The pulpit is still duly filled. The same words of comfort are spoken. The life runs on exactly the same lines, and manifests itself in precisely the same forms. And the subjects, the tone, the moulds, the aims are all so heavenly and so correct that the

question as to the relation of the speaker to his words, and of the pastor to his acts, ceases to present itself. But all the while they lack that very element of personal feeling and personal conviction which constitutes their saving property alike for the man and for those with whom the man deals. He threatens to become a mere mass of lifeless conventionalities, neither finding any inspiration or quickening in his work nor communicating any to that work. Nay, he may experience in the material and conditions of his sacred calling forces that avenge themselves terribly upon him who handles them deceitfully, emptying his life of all helpfulness to others, and filling it with influences that are hurtful, if not fatal, to the minister himself. Men soon feel the world-wide difference between one who speaks and acts out of the fulness and genuine impulses of his own inner life and experience, and him who says simply what he thinks he ought to have said, and plays his part irreproachably but mechanically before the world. And no one can ever calculate the vital difference it makes to the man himself.

VII. And this brings me to a point of view where one of the most imperative necessities of the ministerial life is seen to be met and happily satisfied in one of the most marked features of that life. It may be said of the Christian ministry, with a fulness and an emphasis that hold good nowhere else, that there is a mutually happy as well as an inseparable relation between the man and his work. It is true in a degree and way in which it is true of

no other human calling, that the man finds and makes himself in his work, and that the work calls out and fashions the man.

But to pass from these generalities and concentrate our attention upon one special aspect and condition of the ministerial life, we note as one of its noblest distinctions that, whilst no vocation calls for more complete dedication of the whole man and of the entire life, none supplies such strong inducements, or such abundant opportunities for complete and absolute consecration. The work of the ministry, I say, demands the whole man. It needs strength of intellect, warmth of feeling, energy of will, stirrings of soul, clearness of vision, and firm grasp of hand. It will not rest satisfied with a mere partial dedication of the man, or of the man's capital. In other callings a man may devote a certain portion of his time and energies to the work he has in hand; but he may, at the same time, refuse to confine his life wholly and entirely within the lines and limits of his professional sphere. He may shrink from emptying his whole forces and streams of energy into the prescribed channels of his business or trade. There is no temptation for him to follow such a course. He may justly feel that to do so would unduly contract his activities and hurtfully cramp his nobler powers and aspirations. He may, therefore, deliberately, and in very faithfulness to himself, keep the claims and intrusions of his ordinary work within strict bounds, and jealously maintain a reserve of time and energy and space for meeting the demands of his higher

life. For he knows that in the region of his professional or business activity there is no ample field or adequate provision for the exercise and satisfaction of those higher faculties and more essential needs.

Now all this incongruity and disproportion disappears wholly in the ministerial life. It not only needs and demands the entire man, the whole nature, the undivided time and force and capacity of the minister, and will rest contented with nothing short of that, but it supplies conditions that render such a wholesale consecration not merely possible and safe, but gladsome and rich in noblest gains.

For, while the ministerial life appeals to and has a hand by which it lays hold of and draws towards itself every part of our nature and every force in our humanity, it provides for all it has enlisted in its service the widest and most varied fields of healthy exercise, and it supplies each energy with its most congenial and ennobling object. There is no position or profession in which a man must and ought to be so whole-hearted and so utterly absorbed, working at such a high degree of tension and concentration. It needs it all for both the man and his work. But, on the other hand, there is no position or profession in which this general condition of efficiency may be observed with greater safety, nay, with priceless results. I do not know of any place or work which should, when rightly understood, have such feeble and scanty allurements for the lower and ignobler, and such numerous and powerful attractions for the higher and nobler elements of our being. And I do not

know of any in which, when rightly dealt with, all that is mean and unworthy in a man is so discouraged and kept under, and in which all that is precious and sacred in man finds stronger stimulus and more helpful influences. Of the Christian ministry it can be said, with a truth and certainty that holds true of no other field or form of human activity, that in giving himself wholly to its work and duties a man not merely attains and secures the objects of his ministry, but finds his own highest good and richest reward.

VIII. There is only one other point to which in our present connection I shall direct your attention. I have been speaking of the duties and requirements on the part of the minister which arise out of the general character of the Christian ministry, altogether independently of local distinctions or special obligations. But, as I pointed out, you are aspiring to be one day not merely office-bearers in the Catholic Church of Christ, but ministers in the Presbyterian National Church of Scotland. You hope to carry on your life's work in the service and within the bounds of a Church with a very marked and distinctive history, with very special traditions, genius, privileges, responsibilities, lines of ecclesiastical and channels of religious life and activity; and all that implies certain corresponding qualities and a ready response on the part of her ministers.

You will have to declare, at your entrance upon the office of a minister in our national Church, that you accept the Confession of Faith to be the confession of your faith; acknowledge Presbyterian

Church government, as now settled in law, to be the only government of this Church, and promise to submit yourselves willingly and humbly to the authority of the various courts thereof, and follow no divisive courses from the established doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the Church. Now there can be little or no doubt as to the general drift and meaning of these words; and we may take it for granted that every one who signs or signifies assent to them accepts them in a natural sense, regards them as defining the limits of his liberty and the lines of his action as a minister of our Church. This being so, we not only may but we must infer that he really thinks and feels and will act accordingly. These are the terms upon which he is admitted into the service and invested with the privileges of a minister of the Church of Scotland. The conditions are very clear and very definite. The candidate knows them well beforehand, and is perfectly familiar with their scope and bearing; and he accepts them with his eyes open, and submits to them of his own accord. And so we have a right to point out that, while they do not pledge the minister to assign to the various notes of Presbyterianism, of nationality, or of faithfulness to the Westminster standards anything like a vital or supreme importance, or to decry unduly other Churches with other expressions of faith, devotion, and sense of order, they yet do undoubtedly imply hearty sympathy and substantial agreement with the belief which the Church holds, with the ecclesiastical order which

the Church follows, and with the forms of worship and procedure which the Church prescribes. If these are not to be held as in every item essential to the existence and well-being of every Church, they must at least be accepted as in accordance with reason and Scripture, and most suitable for the circumstances and needs of the land and people among whom we labour. The subscription may not encourage bigotry, fanaticism, or narrow views as to how Christian belief or Christian life may legitimately and even beneficially express themselves; but they certainly do encourage and require sympathy with a certain type of belief, enthusiasm for a certain form of policy, hearty acceptance of a certain mode of worship. It commits every minister to that minimum of agreement and co-operation.

And you must be prepared to render this. You must be honest with yourselves and with the Church which trusts you. You will make no mental reservations that empty the words of their natural meaning and deprive the terms of obligation of their binding force. And when you have, on the strength of those solemn pledges, entered upon office and exercise authority, you will be faithful to your promises and fulfil your vows. You will teach and preach in harmony with the doctrine. You will worship and administer the Sacraments in accordance with the spirit and instructions of the Church. You will observe the government, policy, and discipline of that Church, and by word, example, and influence, do your best

to maintain her authority, dignity, and well-being. You will own and gladly respond to the calls which the Church and the nation make upon you. You will not merely submit to them as ties which bind you, but welcome them as incitements to greater effort, and as supplying opportunities for larger service. You will not, indeed, suffer these weaker sanctions or secondary motives to take the place of, or even to obscure, the supreme and universal—those of loyalty to Christ and of a passionate desire for the salvation of man. But you will let them have their own due place and force, and you will let them add their weight and impetus to the others, as well as prescribe the ways and means by which you may best carry out the purposes of God in your land and generation.

Third Lecture

THE PREACHER AND HIS SERMON

In my last lecture I indicated what ought to be the master forces and predominant features of the ministerial life. To-day I propose working out those general principles more in detail. The minister has many fields of action and many forms of activity. I propose, then, following him into the most important of those spheres and modes of service, and showing how these principles can be worked out in practice. And the FIRST aspect of his life's work to which I would call your attention is that which meets us in *the house of God*, or in the different scenes where men gather together for worship. One of the most prominent, and at the same time one of the most important, functions of the Christian minister is to preach the gospel, interpret God's Word, declare God's will, preside over men's worship, lead their devotions, dispense the sacraments, and, generally, serve as a steward of the various ordinances and means of grace. All these have this one feature in common—that they are

all carried out in some sacred meeting-place and in the assembly of the people, and, further, that in all of them careful, well-ordered speech is the chief agency and means employed.

To begin then, with what undoubtedly bulks largest, even if it does not rank highest, we have the minister as a *Preacher*. There is no fear, in the atmosphere of Scotland, and under the present conditions of ministerial life, that this department should be overlooked or undervalued. The tendency, indeed, has always been, in our land north of the Tweed, to assign undue prominence and an exaggerated importance to the pulpit and sermon, to the platform and the address. At least they have always maintained their pre-eminence amongst us; and, in some cases, at least, have threatened to occupy the entire field, leaving but scanty room for any of the other elements of worship. But however that may be, there can be no doubt whatever that the minister, here or elsewhere, will always exercise a very large part of his influence in the pulpit and through his sermon, and therefore must direct very special attention to that branch of his work, and devote to it much of his energy and care. And in order that he may conduct his preparation, and direct his efforts intelligently and so successfully, he must keep in mind what preaching implies, and what a preacher of the gospel has got to do.

There is such an endless variety in all the different conditions of the problem, in the gifts

and capacities of the preacher, in the needs and susceptibilities of the hearers, in the subjects, methods, and types of the faithful, edifying, and effective presentation of truth, that any attempt to prescribe fixed lines or give minute instructions would be a mere waste of time. There are scores of different kinds of sermons and as many different ways of preaching, all of which are excellent and effective in their own fashion and degree. There is no possibility, and there is no advantage, but the very opposite, in casting them all in the same mould and turning them all out after the same pattern. But I may mention some qualities which must belong to every sermon worthy of the name, and some objects which every preacher must needs keep steadily in view.

I. And, *first of all*, a word or two as to the *topics* of the preacher, and the *field* from which he should gather his subjects.

Now, I grant that no hard and fast rule can be laid down or adhered to rigidly in this matter. There are few grave and serious questions that might not conceivably, under special circumstances, be taken up and dealt with from the pulpit, both with propriety and benefit. Everything that concerns the will of God and the higher welfare of man may be fairly declared to belong to its province. And certainly there are few things of which a thoughtful, reverent man would care to speak to his fellow-men that may not be included in that wide range. Yet the very nature of the case and the special character of the Christian

ministry suggest one or two considerations that must limit and control this freedom of choice.

(*a*) One that must immediately occur to all is that, as the minister does not speak in his own name, but professes to be sent and commissioned by God, he must really bring with him a *Divine message.* What he has got to speak about and tell is something that forms part of God's revelation to men—something that finds a place in the expression of God's mind and will made in Holy Scripture. In everything the first consideration with him must ever be, "What saith the Lord?" And in all that he says he must make it abundantly evident that that rules and determines every decision—that to that final test and standard every question must be referred. He is sent to speak for God, and to make known the will of God, and he must see to it that every sermon and address is in real conformity with the terms of his commission. If the name of God, and the phrases of theology do not appear prominently, yet the vital connection between the truths and forces of that holy land, and the words he employs, must be made apparent to all. The spirit of revelation must breathe through every sentence. The sources, the handling, the aim, must all suggest and lead the thoughts up to God.

(*b*) But there is another consideration which must still further limit the field in which the preacher habitually moves, and still more exactly define the subjects to which he must specially devote his strength and time. He is a Christian

minister, a preacher of the gospel, an ambassador of Christ. Ministers of other religions may claim to speak for God, and may deliver what they consider their heavenly message. Philanthropists and other teachers may publish the truths, unfold the arguments, and propagate the views that they consider to be in harmony with the Divine mind and will. They have their own appropriate place, and they fulfil what they deem their appointed mission. But the Christian minister is set by his Master in a very definite relation to Himself, and has a very definite task assigned him,—and he is no true minister of Christ unless he maintains his position there and develops himself to that specific duty. He has to make known to men the will and purposes and mercy of God in Jesus Christ. He has to set before men's minds and commend to men's hearts the facts, the influences, the motives, and the hopes that centre around the life and death —the person and teaching of Christ. He has to set forth the incarnate, suffering, crucified, risen, and glorified Redeemer as the perfect revelation of God's will and nature—as the Divine source of hope and life — as the perfect standard of all judgment, and the perfect pattern of all excellence. And, in speaking, the minister must feel and manifest the pressure and controlling force of this great law. He must show that he himself believes that Christ is the heart and centre of all things, and that Christ holds in His hand the key of all the problems of time and eternity. He must never forget Christ, or lose sight and touch of Christ

himself, and he must never allow his hearers to do so either. He must linger with very special fondness around the subjects that tend to bring men more into the presence and under the spell of Christ. He will dwell preferably on everything that helps men to know Christ, to understand Christ, and that tends to foster love and reverence for Christ. There will be an unmistakable Christian note and accent in every discourse. Christ and Christianity will be all over it—all through it—communicating a flavour, a colouring, a quality, and a tone that no one can fail to recognise. He must borrow his standards, his ideals, his arguments, his motives, his spirit, and his aims direct from Christ. He must view all things and judge all things in the light of the life that was once lived in Canaan, and of the death that was endured on Calvary. Even where the historical facts and distinctive truths of Christianity are not articulately stated, the presence of these in the speaker's mind, and the pressure of these on the speaker's nature, must be seen and felt; and must, so far as possible, be reproduced in the minds and hearts of those who hear. I cannot see how any Christian minister can for one moment escape from the pressure of this sacred obligation, or be true to the terms of his commission in any other way. It is utterly hopeless to lay down exactly and rigidly the limits beyond which this relation to Christ forbids him to wander, or the lines on which his fidelity to his Master compels him to move. And, fortunately, there is as little need. Every

one must interpret, and will interpret, these by the canons and before the bar of his own conscience. To his own Master he standeth or falleth. But for him who accepts his commission heartily, and seeks to fulfil it faithfully, the highway will be neither difficult to find nor hard to keep.

(*c*) What I have been saying suggests a very useful and safe practical rule in the selection of *subjects*. And it is this: don't dwell too often or too long upon what we may call the skirts or circumference of the Christian faith or practice. The topics derived from that region may, no doubt, deserve some place in your thoughts and utterances, but only a subordinate place. Reserve the first place and your special strength for facts and truths, for lessons and duties of prime importance. Keep for the most part close to the centre and heart of all things. Dwell with special frequency and with special intensity upon what the Gospels give most prominence to and lay weightiest stress upon. You sometimes find men acting as if they had fully explored every nook and corner of the human life of Christ, as if they had exhausted the whole meaning and interest of Christ's work and teaching, as if the figure of Christ upon the Cross, with all the hopes and interests that centre around it, had lost most of its freshness and attraction for themselves and for their hearers. And so they abandon the old routes, and wander into other regions. They drop the old topics, and seek for others with more of the fresh dew still lying upon them, and with a larger measure of unimpaired

vitality still stirring within them;—seek for them eagerly on every side—from literature, science, art, politics, and the problems of our social system. Now all this casting about for subjects that will rouse and attract more powerfully and permanently than those that lie thick around the cradle of Bethlehem, the Cross of Calvary, the open tomb of the Garden, and the parting scene of Olivet is, to say the least, a grievous blunder and a fatal mistake. If deliberately persisted in and carried out without due reserve and careful subordination, it must defeat the very primary objects of the Christian ministry. It is in the innermost circle of the life of Christ and of the workings of Christianity that the minister will always find his most congenial sphere, and his most powerful and effective forces and themes.

II. The same result is arrived at when we turn and look at the preacher as not merely charged with a divine message and burdened with a divine commission, but as bound to deliver and exercise it in such a way as shall most certainly reach and most powerfully affect the men to whom it is addressed. Before you can deal effectively with men, you must study and know the men. Before you can meet their wants, you must ascertain what those wants really are. And before you can present your appeal in its most attractive and persuasive form, you must be well acquainted with the tastes and prejudices, with the helps and hindrances in your hearers. And that, remember, not merely of humanity in the mass, for you are not

called upon to deal with any merely abstract man. You have to speak to men and women of a very marked type, amid very special surroundings, living and moving on a very definite plane. And so you must take all these circumstances and peculiarities into account if you are ever to disarm their suspicions, break down their resistance, awaken their interest, conciliate their favour, and find a way into their hearts and minds. Simply as a man the hearer shares the common wants, is open to the common influences, and responds to the common appeals. But as educated or uneducated, as rich or poor, as working in the fields or toiling in the mine, he has special needs, and must be approached and dealt with in a special way. And all these things have to be considered and reckoned with in framing our speech, so as to reach its destination and produce its desired effect. Without this general adaptation to universal needs of the great family of humanity, and the superadded modifications requisite for adjusting it to the widely varying necessities, the minister's work in the pulpit would be all in vain. And from these various general conditions we see that certain inferences follow. Let me mention one or two of the most important of these.

(*a*) One of these is the need for constant and careful study of *Holy Scripture*. It is out of that treasure-house that the minister must draw all the facts and truths and substance of his preaching. That must be the source of all his light and hope, and inspiring forces. He finds there the message

which he is to bring, and the conditions on which he is to offer the divine gifts. It, and it alone, tells the story of God's dealings with men, and notes all the different stages in the gradual development of the divine purposes. It is the sole record of what Christ said and did, of what inspired Prophet and Apostle announced and taught. In short, apart from the Word of God, the minister of Christ is a man without a commission, without authority, without anything to tell, and without any reason for his existence. It is there he must seek, and from these he must bring everything. And so he must explore it foot by foot, lovingly and carefully. He must make himself thoroughly and familiarly acquainted with all its contents. He must make a specially devout and diligent study of the New Testament, more particularly of the Gospels, where Christ lives and moves, speaks and suffers. He must not merely traverse all its area, and familiarise himself with all its facts and aspects, but he must make his way into its heart and inner shrine, and dwell there so permanently that the whole man will be penetrated and affected by its spirit and power. He must keep himself and it in such close and vital contact with one another, that it will become part and parcel of himself, colour all his thoughts, mould all his nature, communicate a Christian tone and quality to every outcome of his life. That cannot be the work of a day, nor even of a few years. It must be the slow, steady, unwearied task of a lifetime, patiently pursued and lovingly continued from week to week, and from

year to year. It will never be complete, but it must always be growing.

(*b*) And parallel with the study of the Scriptures must proceed the study of *human nature*, and of *human life*. If you are to be a skilful and successful physician, you must know the constitution and state of your patient, and know them well. If you are to farm with profit and effect, you must make yourself thoroughly acquainted with the properties of your soil, and the peculiarities of your climate. And if you are to preach to any good purpose, you must not aim at random or speak in the air, but you must know generally and particularly the men and women to whom you preach. You must know what they need, and what supplies that need. You must know what forces are working against them, and blighting their inner life, and what avenues of access still exist through which you may approach them and bring them to relief. More, yet more of this kind of knowledge is absolutely indispensable to the preacher. He cannot possibly have too much of it, and his efficiency will largely depend upon its accuracy and extent.

And so you must seek it wherever it can be found. You will find large stores of that knowledge in the Bible itself. You will find, too, endless supplies of it waiting to be gathered by every one who looks for it and searches for it in the fields of history, observation, and experience. And there is another book that will prove a very mine of learning, and supply many invaluable hints. I mean the book of one's own inner and outer life, with its

various pages all written over in white and black with the record of joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, successes and failures. That is one great reason why the minister must not be a man of narrow, limited range, either in reading or intercourse, in practical experience or in mental horizon. He should have read much, and thought much. He should have moved in many circles, and come into contact with many men. He should have seen life in many of its aspects, and human nature in many of its phases. Without that he will never acquire the wisdom, the tact, the harmonious relation between himself and his hearer that lend force and sureness of aim to preaching in general, or to any one sermon in particular.

(*c*) And then a *third* requisite must be strongly insisted upon, and that is, that the *preacher's individuality* do not intervene and spoil what is said. Something offensive in the channel may corrupt and taint the very purest water. Some flaw in the glass may disfigure the very fairest landscape that is seen through the distorting medium. So, in like manner, something in the preacher may utterly destroy the effect of the very best material and of the best handling of the material; and, on the other hand, something in the minister may, and often does, lend to the subject and its treatment a peculiar persuasiveness and power that are due largely to the personal element. It is not ability or knowledge or artistic skill alone that constitutes a man a preacher, and a sermon a success. In that, as in other things, the race is

not always to the swift nor the battle to the strong. It is not a question merely, or even mainly, of intellectual power or gift of expression. It is, to say the very least, as much a question of moral earnestness and spiritual insight. The whole man, and not merely a part of the man, enters into and determines the character and worth of the sermon. And so the weaker ones need not despond, and the stronger ones must not presume. A sermon, in its living force and practical working, is not merely the sum of so many truths and lessons enforced in so many sentences and with more or less art. The preacher himself looks and speaks and moves in it all, and the hearer cannot detach the speaker from what he says, but finds a charm or repulsive element, a softening or hardening influence, in the personality that is descried behind.

(*d*) It is from this point of view that we can best arrive at a safe decision on some interesting and important questions concerning preaching, and appreciate the right place and real value of certain elements and features. It enables us to fix pretty safely the fitting proportions of what we may call the personal and the impersonal element in the sermon,—how far a minister may allow his own likings and tendencies and personal idiosyncrasies to affect his choice of subjects, his treatment of these subjects, or his dealings with his people as interpreter of truth and as messenger from Christ. We recognise how inevitably the message must bear the accents of the messenger's voice, and be cast in the mould of the speaker's mind. We see

that by such a process the divine matter is, so to speak, humanised and accommodated to the wants and capacities of the hearers. We see, too, that in that very fact lies the responsibility and the test of the preacher, so that a vast momentum and a subtle charm are communicated to the words of the man whose hearts is pure, whose life is holy, and whose nature is in harmony with the spirit of his words; whilst a terrible, though just, penalty is exacted of him whose utterances have no root in his own experience, and no confirmation in his own life, by their utter failure to move or impress. It is a sure and self-acting law, increasing the influence and authority in proportion to the faithfulness, the spiritual growth and inner gains of the speaker, and detracting from his persuasiveness and power as the man gets further separated from reality and becomes more of a machine.

But, after all, it is not himself that any minister preaches, but Jesus Christ. It is not what he thinks or prefers that he is called upon to teach. Nor is it his own favourite aspects of the truth, or ways of presenting the truth, that he must confine himself to, or bring continually into the foreground. He must carefully and faithfully observe the proportion and scale and subordination of truths and lessons he finds in the Word of God. He must take care not to obtrude himself between God and his hearers, or to make his own preferences the sole arbiter and exclusive measure of the relative importance of the needs and of the appliances. He must, indeed, deal with them in his own way. He

cannot escape from the limitations of his own personality or from the conditions of his own activity. But he must not speak and act as an independent and irresponsible agent. After all, he exercises only a vicarious authority. He is merely the representative and agent of his divine Master. His first, his supreme care, must be to be true to that Master. And in maintaining that loyalty he will best secure his object and discharge his duty of being true to his own higher, better self.

(*e*) Here, too, we find ourselves in the right position to understand and appreciate the importance and place of certain features and qualities of the preacher. It follows necessarily from what I have said that, when a minister stands in a right relation to his Master, his office, and his hearers, the effect will invariably manifest itself not merely in the matter, but also in the tone and manner and spirit of the speaker. He who realises that he is speaking and pleading for Christ to men, who are in sore need of Christ and after whom Christ tenderly yearns, will hardly need to be enjoined and entreated to be earnest, dignified, kind, and sympathetic in all that he says and does. He will be all that inevitably and instinctively. Just as joy or sorrow, love or hate, will assert themselves, and will communicate their own specific tone and mark to every accent and look and gesture of the speaker, so the true preacher will himself come under the spell of his divine Teacher, his divine subject, and his divine aims and responsibilities, and will naturally and almost unconsciously

betray the influence of these in every word and in the spiritual atmosphere that environs every expression.

You cannot be too grave and fervent. You cannot be too deeply impressed with the absolute necessity of being reverent, tender, and free from all suspicion either of lukewarmness or mere professionalism. But, after all, these are precious qualities and vital elements not so much to be imported from without and added by mechanical mixture to the product of the sermon or address, as to be generated from within, and so reveal their presence and influence naturally and spontaneously in the nature and utterances of the speaker. If the roots are in the mind and heart of the preacher they will not fail to bear leaf and flower and fruit, adding unspeakably to the beauty and value of the crop. If they are merely supplied according to order, and simply added on as an external grace, they will exercise little attraction or power. They will soon be detected as artificial and spurious, and will not only fail in their object, but produce an opposite effect. You can grow, and you have got to grow, these qualities and ingredients. Indeed one of the great aims and one of the richest rewards of the ministerial life is just the power and opportunity of preparing and extending the soil from which these attributes and virtues will freely and spontaneously spring. Every act of faithfulness, every victory over your lower self, every step of progress in knowledge and love, as well as of growth in spirituality and devotion to Christ's

work, will beget and find its rich recompense in a corresponding increase of impressiveness, efficacy, and power.

The same rule applies in many other cases and with regard to many other things that may well be regarded and commended as invaluable helps, if not indispensable equipments, of the effective preacher. I have not time to refer particularly to these. It is not necessary; for, on the one hand, their value is apparent to all, and, on the other hand, they will come as a matter of course to the aid of every one who, without thinking of or consciously seeking them, lives the life, pursues the course, and maintains the relation to Christ and his office which alone and unfailingly generate those facilities and characteristics.

III. As for *the outward form* or *internal structure* of a sermon, it would be easy to say much that is both true and pertinent; but it is at the same time difficult to say anything that would be universally applicable or practically helpful. Sermons may, and indeed ought to be, of many kinds, and each kind has its own laws, and demands a special treatment. The simple exposition of Scripture; the impassioned appeal to the heart and conscience; the communion address; and the presentation of the claims of our home or foreign mission work—all these must be cast in different moulds and possess distinctive excellencies. And then, in addition to the perplexity arising from that source, there is the further complexity caused by the wide diversity of gift and tendency, of circumstance

and call in the preacher. Each individual minister not only will, but must, adapt his method and his style to his subject and occasion, as well as to his capacities and powers of expression. He can use only what he has and what he can press into his service. The poor scholar cannot avail himself of the treasures of learning. The man of stammering lips cannot command the rich resources of eloquence and oratory. The man speaking in a kitchen gathering, or to a humble, unlearned auditory, will not, and should not, speak in the same style or use the same language as he would in an academic pulpit or before a highly educated congregation. And, in consequence, the choice of style and form in preaching must needs be largely left to the right feeling and common sense of the preacher himself, who ought to know and must judge what is in fullest accordance with his own powers and the circumstances of the case.

But still there are some general canons that may be safely laid down and strongly enforced as of prime importance and of universal application. I do not deny that they may bear a suspicious likeness to mere truisms and old commonplaces—but they are not a whit the less valuable and indispensable because of that. We need to be reminded as well as instructed.

(1) *The first, and perhaps* the most essential, rule for effective speaking is to have something *real* and *definite* and *important* to say; to be *interested* in it; to know thoroughly what you wish to say; and to have a great longing to make it *intelligible*

and *interesting* to those you address. You must begin with that, and without that you have no right to speak, and may as well spare your pains and hold your tongue. Almost everything is possible to him who has honestly fulfilled that condition. But without that necessary qualification you will soon experience disastrous failure and humiliating exposure. Speak because you have something distinct and weighty to say. Say it because you feel it to be needful for you and helpful to others to say it. See that the subject takes possession of you, and that you have mastered the subject, and then, out of your fulness of knowledge and constraint of impulse, speak.

(2) And then, having thus established your base of operations, and having made sure of your point of departure, the next counsel that I should be inclined to give and press upon you and myself, is: Let every sermon have some *real teaching* and *substantial matter* in it, and let it be, as far as possible, *a living whole*, centering around a fixed point, dealing with a definite subject, and preserving and emphasising that unity both in form and in mode of treatment. There may be several parts and members, but there must be a close, real, vital relation between all these, and a subordination of them all to one controlling purpose and idea; each part furthering the interests of the others, and adding to the completeness of the whole. It should aim at and steadily pursue the object of setting some great truth or fact in clearest light—enforcing and apply-

ing some great lesson—the awakening or deepening of some one strong, permanent impression. It should be a living, self-contained organism, with hands and feet indeed, but with one controlling will and one vivifying soul.

(3) My next advice would be: See to it that you make your words and language as *simple* as the subject and your capacities admit. I add the last qualification because the same degree of simplicity is neither adapted to every subject nor is it open to every speaker. Some themes demand a more elaborate treatment than others, and some speakers possess the gift and grace of unadorned lucidity more than their fellows. But in every case be as simple and as clear as you can. The weak and uneducated need it; the strong and well educated relish and appreciate it. I do not say that in some cases the possession and exercise of other great powers may not have compensated and more than atoned for the absence of this saving quality; but we cannot count upon the eloquence, the learning, the spiritual intensity and keen sympathy that in those exceptional cases restored the balance; while certainly the great majority of powerful and successful preachers have been men who used the simple language and homely style that are intelligible and dear to the mind and heart of the people.

(4) In addition to simplicity, though closely related to it, is the quality of *directness*. You are in the pulpit, and the people in the pews presenting a fair and unshifting mark. Well, load

your gun well, aim carefully, and shoot straight at the head and heart of your hearers. Don't merely make sure of your priming and of your instrument, but make sure of your aim and of your mark. And having done so, think and look at nothing else, but fire direct and steady at that point. Don't beat about the bush or linger on the way, turning now to this side, and now to that. Come to close grips as soon as you can with your subject and with your hearers. Be plain and lucid, but, in addition to that, be direct and pointed. Let each hearer understand your meaning and follow your reasoning; but, above all, let him feel as if the appeal was directed to, and the lesson designed for himself. Think of your people when you are writing or speaking, and see to it that the piece is well pointed and that the marksman actually hits.

(5) And for this end look to it that the sermon be thoroughly *concrete* in form and conspicuously *human* in tone. Human beings cannot be fed on dry dogmas or on general statements. At least they will never take pleasure or thrive on that innutritious fare. The great mass of hearers will turn away with weariness and aversion from these husks which only the highly philosophical and men of peculiar tastes do eat and profess to relish. They delight in sermons that throb and pulsate with human feeling, and that deal closely with the actual experiences and real problems of human life. They are not so much interested in the "world" or "humanity" in general as in some

special land or person in particular. They long for the sound of a human voice and the touch of a living hand. Treat all your subjects with as much human freshness and sympathy, and make all your handling of them as personal and concrete as you are capable of, and your sermons will never fall a prey to the dry rot of lifelessness and dulness.

IV. Let me add a word or two on a few matters, not perhaps of primary importance, yet not without real interest.

(*a*) There is the *length* of sermons. I am afraid one can hardly say much that is likely to be of much use on that question. Length of sermons is to be measured not merely by the watch or hour-glass, but also by the character of the preacher and the endurance of the hearers. Taking the minister, the subject, and the congregation all into account, many a sermon of an hour's duration is really much shorter than another which lasted only twenty minutes. And so, as the quality as well as the quantity must enter into the problem, it is not one that can be quickly or generally solved. All we can say with any degree of certainty is that, considering that human patience is strictly limited and is not tending to enlarge, but rather contract, while the preacher's power of maintaining lengthened interest is also limited, the wisest policy is to err on the short side. The sermon will probably be improved by the shortening, and you will almost certainly secure more attentive and grateful hearers. A little

compression and tightening of the structure tends to improve most utterances, while the last superfluous ten minutes often undo the work of all the preceding thirty. Therefore, for your own sakes, for your hearers' sake, and, above all, for your object's sake, be merciful.

(*b*) As for the vexed question of whether a sermon should have *heads* or *divisions* or not, that depends largely on the man and on the subject. I can easily conceive of an address so dominated by one master idea, and so animated by one strong, sustained feeling, that it hardly admits of being cut up into portions or divided into stadia. But these are exceptions, and very rare exceptions. As a rule, it no doubt tends greatly to clearness and decision of movement to have the field definitely marked out, and to have both the lines of thought and the stages of progress pretty distinctly marked. It is a help both to speaker and hearer. They serve as kindly stepping-stones across the stream, or as friendly sign-posts and resting-places in the unfamiliar route. Only don't unnecessarily multiply them or sacrifice the building to the scaffolding. Don't let them be too much in evidence or impede the natural flow of the discourse. They should be subservient to the main purpose, and promote the interests both of the subjects and the hearers; and for that they must both be few and natural. If not, they are apt to be a hindrance, and so should be dispensed with.

(*c*) Again, what is to be said about the relative merits of what generally passes under the name of

a "*course of sermons*" on a special subject or portion of Scripture, and large variety and constant change in the choice of texts? I answer unhesitatingly—neither, taken by itself, is sufficient or satisfactory, whilst each, in its own place and measure, is excellent and needful. A blend of both is best. Your own powers, and probably your experience of the needs and susceptibilities of your hearers will be your safest guides to the right proportions to be observed in the mixture. Each method aims at, and each—to a certain extent, at least—attains a very vital object; yet each has necessarily the defects of its excellencies, and just in proportion as it successfully meets some special want it leaves another unprovided for. A different text and subject each time secures that variety which is considered to be such a sure specific against satiety and mental indigestion. On the other hand, it tends to scrappiness, and presents a terribly strong temptation to individual preferences and consequent want of balance and healthy proportion. "Courses of sermons" that aim at exploring one field or dealing with one book or portion of Scripture secure more thorough teaching and more complete familiarity with the Word of God. But this is secured at the risk of some weariness, and at the sacrifice of some liveliness and freshness. And so, perhaps, each should maintain its own place and fulfil its own mission, while it is all the while supplemented by the action of the other.

Certainly there is in the circumstances and

conditions of our modern life a growing need for something like detailed and systematic instruction from the pulpit. Men are nowadays too ignorant of their Bibles and too much accustomed to being fed upon scraps and snippets of knowledge to dispense safely with some continuous biblical teaching and some more substantial spiritual fare on Sundays. Certainly the good old system of giving a series of lectures on some special book of Scripture, or upon some one subject or number of closely related subjects, has much to recommend it—provided always the selection of a subject is made judiciously, dealt with faithfully, and not made a refuge for the intellectually destitute, or an occasion for endless discursive talk. Indeed, one might safely go even further, and sigh for a return in one of "the diets of worship" to some modification of the ancient but now disused practice of "catechising," or, at least, of methodical and carefully graded teaching. If any ecclesiastical Stephenson or Arkwright among you discover and get the big world of your Church or the smaller world of your parish to accept of such a system, with all necessary variations and improvements to adapt it to our present circumstances, you will deserve the warmest gratitude of the Christian community.

(*c*) Another question long discussed and never yet finally settled, nor likely ever to be settled, is, "*Should sermons be read, or delivered without paper, or how?*" This is one of the questions that are not quite so simple as they look, and

where a good many considerations have to be taken into account. If you deal with it abstractly, and simply ask, "Which is the most natural and effective way of preaching?" I do not think there is much room for hesitation or for doubt. The ideal preacher is one who, out of a full heart and mind, speaks direct to the people without the intervention of manuscript or note. The strong and inveterate preference of congregations for this mode of address is most natural and thoroughly justifiable. Undoubtedly the other methods are, in their measure and degree, departures from the perfect type, and just in that proportion fail in their effects. That presupposes, however, that the reproduction of the better pattern is fairly successful, and not a glaring and conspicuous failure. "A living dog is better than a dead lion." A comparatively humble original may be of more value than the mechanical copy of some great master. And, in like manner, a sermon carefully written and "felly" read, like Dr. Chalmers', may be far more effective and even acceptable than a thin, rough-angled discourse imperfectly committed and stumblingly delivered. If you have a retentive memory and a rich store of language be thankful, but mix trembling with your mirth. Take double care, in that case, not to let facility of speech act as a snare, or take the place of thought, of study, and careful preparation; but use the gift gratefully and wisely, speaking to your people from your heart as you look them in the face. But if you are not thus

gifted, and find neither accurate thought nor exact, impressive expression come without the artificial help ; then, in the name of honesty and righteousness, in the interests of your own peace, your people's welfare, and your subject's claims, write and read, but read as little slavishly, and as effectively as you can.

I may give you the experience of one who has tried all the different ways, and has pretty thoroughly exhausted all the possibilities of each method for *himself.* My conclusion is that the worst possible way for one of feeble verbal memory is that which entails laborious learning by heart, frantic efforts to retain the fading matter in the treacherous mind, and then agonising struggles to reproduce it all from the illegible characters and blurred tablets of memory. I have yet to hear of any torture more wearing to the minister, or of any process more dreary for all who listen to the limping repetition of the mechanical task. But other preachers more highly gifted may have different experiences, and if so, I heartily congratulate them, and wish them God-speed. Notes and outlines, more or less full—guide posts here and there,—or even a detailed transcript of some of the more important passages—these are all helps towards the attainment of that more perfect liberty and independent movement that we should all undoubtedly struggle after. Only don't attempt what you know you cannot do at all, or cannot do tolerably well. If you cannot perform athletic feats, be content to walk soberly.

If you cannot move without support, use your staff or crutches thankfully, and get on somehow.

And let me add that every minister who is eager to acquire some self-reliance and increase of facility will easily find opportunity for that on some occasion and in some theme that admits or even demands special simplicity and imparts special confidence. If a man does not eagerly embrace these opportunities, and, having utilised them, does not make any way whatever in his education, there may be some reasonable ground for doubt as to whether he has not mistaken his vocation. Only keep in mind, too, that he who is afflicted with a fatal facility and imperturbable self-confidence, and so makes these the substitutes for reflection and artifices for concealing poverty of matter, may prove a still less efficient interpreter of the Word and a still severer test of a congregation's temper and patience. I do not know of any royal road or short and easy cut to excellence and efficiency in the pulpit. One will start on the way heavily handicapped and will move with difficulty and make slow progress. Another, with superior gifts of mind and nature, of imagination and feeling, of voice and power of expression, will easily take the lead in the race. But one and all must travel along the King's highway. He must give his time and energy to the work. He must spare no pains and grudge no effort. His heart and soul must be in what he does. He must take delight in it—give himself wholly to it. He

must ever be reviewing his methods and trying to correct them. He must always be adding to his resources and materials, and always seeking for clearer light and greater efficiency. And, in addition to all that, he must be continually crying to God for a blessing on his work, for a deeper feeling of consecration and a stronger tide of enthusiasm.

I do not know of any other route which the Word of God or the experience of man has opened up, whereby the patient, conscientious traveller may count upon reaching some desirable point. But he who sets his feet resolutely on that track, and perseveres steadfastly in that direction, will not fail to win recognition both from God and man. He may not get fame, or climb up to a distinguished position in the Church. He may never be a famous preacher, swaying multitudes and earning admiration and applause. Most of us are hopelessly mediocre in gifts, and must needs be content with very moderate influence and repute. But if our aims and ambitions are in harmony with the ideals and vows of our sacred calling, and so seek higher marks and nobler objects than mere professional advancement and self-glorification, they run no risk whatever of coming short of their purpose.

Many methods have been suggested and employed with good effect by some who were greatly in earnest about the success of their pulpit work. For example, I have heard some very successful preachers strongly recommend the practice of

keeping commonplace books and detailed records of facts and illustrations, and every kind of material likely to be of use in sermon-making, which they happened to meet with in their reading or experience. I can well believe that in that way a rich treasure-house of material, very serviceable for the preacher, might gradually accumulate. I can understand how one who had his work so much at heart as to take all that trouble, and whose activity ran on those lines, might greatly profit by such a device. But ministers are very differently made, and what one might find a very helpful plan, another might find of no use at all, if not an absolute hindrance. An earnest man will thankfully make trial of all different measures. A wise man will distinguish which of them all meets his own case, and so deserves to be retained. So too, with many other expedients that have been found of use by some.

Certainly there is no effort or series of efforts too exacting, no act or continuous acts of self-denial too formidable, to be faced and submitted to willingly by the man who realises what his responsibilities and opportunities are each time he enters the pulpit—what a trust he vindicates or betrays, what vital issues hang upon his efficiency or inefficiency. There must be many thousands of ministers within the borders of our own land who are privileged once or twice a week at least to stand up in larger or smaller assemblies, amid solemn, respectful silence, and under the spell of sacred associations, and speak for God on the

subjects that most deeply affect the interests and touch the hearts of men. Never was a man called and invited to attempt and achieve such great things for God and for the good of his fellows. Never were more precious interests at stake. Never were there such glad encouragements to the faithful; and never were there such dreadful penalties for the faithless.

And what is the fruit of it all? I do not know, and I do not like to calculate. But, after all, it is Christ's own work, and Christ's own appointed way, and so there is no reason why any one of you should lose heart or despond. But there is just as little reason why you should relax your efforts and presume. He who labours in God's own field with all his energy, and in God's own way, will assuredly not be put to shame.

Fourth Lecture

PUBLIC WORSHIP, THE SACRAMENTS, ETC.

TO-DAY we continue our survey of the Minister's functions as presiding over the Sacred Services of religion and directing the course of Public Worship.

It might appear as if, in what I have already said on one branch of that subject, I had yielded rather too much to the Scottish tendency of elevating the sermon to a position of undue importance and crushing the other elements into a very narrow and subordinate place. But, in truth, I am deeply impressed myself, and would fain have you, too, strongly impressed with the coequal dignity and vital importance of the companion elements of Prayer and Praise and Reading of God's word. I have dwelt at greater length on the principles that ought to guide the minister in preparing and delivering his message, because many of these are applicable, not merely to sermon-making, but supply light and afford guidance in all the other parts of Divine service.

Indeed, that service ought to be, like the sermon itself, an organic living whole; each part filling a definite place and discharging a definite office, yet all working in harmony; each supplementing the others, and all directed to one common object and controlled by one central force. And so I have already, in what I have said about the sermon, anticipated a good deal of what I should have to say now with regard to the motives and aims, the methods and aids, of the minister in the devotional and other parts of public worship, and so made it possible to deal with these more briefly.

The very expression, "Public Worship of God," brings into strong relief the elements of *prayer* and *praise*, and protests against the tendency to sacrifice everything to the exactions of the itching ear and to the thirst for excitement. We need to hear what God the Lord will say, but this we can learn in the reading as well as in the preaching of the Word; and, when all this is attained, there still remains the irrepressible longing and absolute necessity to draw near to God, to enter into spiritual communion with Him, to unburden our hearts and souls of their hopes and fears, their love and longing, and so find the repose and strength that come through touch with God. Prayer and praise and reading of God's word are therefore no mere accidental and detachable parts of public worship, but vital and inseparable. And certainly not the least responsible and momentous part of the minister's duty in the pulpit and in the house of

God is his action and influence in this specially sacred province.

There is one consideration that must, I think, appeal with very special force to the minister's conscience and sense of honour with reference to all these various functions—I mean the practically *unlimited power* which he wields and the absolute dependence of the congregation upon his pleasure in all those vital matters. In other Churches this power and subjection are strictly limited and largely controlled. This is not the time or the place for discussing the relative advantages and disadvantages of these different systems. It is easy to discern and appreciate the grand idea and precious truth underlying and finding expression in both methods. And one might be fairly permitted to see good in each when rightly used, and yet to recognise that perhaps the most perfect system of all might be such a reconciliation and combination of both that the main advantages of each might be secured, and the chief dangers of each might be avoided—some measure of prescribed action limiting the eccentricities and correcting the defects of individual liberty, whilst at the same time a certain degree of freedom supplied a much-needed element of flexibility and freshness to the rigidity and mechanical movement of a fixed order and liturgy.

There are many indications that such ideas are in the air, and such transition movements near at hand, if not really in active operation. It will be one of the most delicate and important duties

which will await you in the future to guide and control this movement wisely and successfully; with due regard to the highest spiritual interests, and, at the same time, to the widely varying prepossessions and preferences of the Scottish people. May you play your part with due understanding of the will of God and the needs of men; with due appreciation of the real conditions of the problem and of a desirable settlement; with a happy blending of faithfulness and prudence, of courage and tenderness.

But, in the meantime, remember that, as I said, the whole body of the Christian people assembled for worship are wholly dependent upon you for their aids and guidance in the work of approaching their Maker and their Saviour, and in bringing their whole nature into vital touch with Him in the services of prayer or praise. Only think what that involves, and you will not regard your position lightly, nor approach your task carelessly. It lies with you, and with you alone, under God, to what points their hearts and souls shall be directed, in what channels the streams of their hope and longing shall flow, what helps or hindrances each individual worshipper, with his own special joy and sorrow and need, shall find in what is uttered in prayer, sung in praise, or read in his hearing from God's holy Word. It is perhaps a burden heavier than any single minister's shoulders should be called to bear. It is perhaps a responsibility that none of us is qualified to meet. But, at any-rate, the very consciousness of the arduousness and

perils of the task, of the weakness and imperfections of the agent, and of the touching dependence and helplessness of the flock, may well appeal to our chivalry and stir us up to make the most strenuous efforts to avoid disaster and guilt in the discharge of this sacred duty.

II. With regard to the *spirit* and *matter* and *form* of *public prayer*, it is a subject almost too sacred, too delicate, and too inward to be dealt with by the statement and application of any rigorous laws and scientific rules.

Fortunately the Scottish minister has easy access now to many valuable sources of light and guidance in conducting this part of Divine worship. And I cannot conceive of any surer and more effective way of gaining a clear conception of what ought to be the tone and form of public prayer, and of bringing the devotional part of public worship into closer conformity with that ideal, than by carefully studying the various models and materials supplied by Holy Scripture and by the devotional utterances of saints and holy men of old. Even to confine ourselves to the limits of our own land and Church, there is invaluable material for such a purpose in Knox's *Liturgy*, in the *Book of the Directory of Public Worship*, in the publications of our Church Service Society, and in those of the F. C. and U. P. Public Worship Associations. If a man studies these diligently, uses their material judiciously, and seeks to reproduce what is most suitable, not slavishly, but freely and intelligently, public prayer in Presbyterian worship would soon

cease to be either the rhetorical address, the conveyance of minute detailed information on all points to God and man, the theological dissertation, the long, rambling, disconnected string of pious ejaculations, which at one time it was sometimes, rightly or wrongly, represented to be.

The education of nature and the development of devotional feeling secured by such familiarity with the most perfect models is the best preservative against the worst faults and greatest dangers of free prayer in public—is, indeed, the surest way of discovering and making ourselves masters of its vast capabilities and resources. Perhaps I might be allowed here to add in a sentence or two some counsel for those that are in this region groping their way and seeking for light. Cultivate a devotional spirit in your own heart. Ask for the Holy Spirit's aid in this sacred, difficult work. Keep the God you are addressing, and the men and women you are representing, before your minds. Order your thoughts and arrange your matter carefully beforehand. Use simple, grave, and, as far as possible, biblical phraseology. Don't be long. Don't be too familiar or too detailed. Don't be too subjective and hortative. Remember you are praying to God, and not preaching to men. And let experience of past shortcomings urge and guide you to a more faithful and effective discharge of your solemn trust in the future.

III. It might seem, at first sight, as if the next element—that of *praise*—in the public worship of

God lay outside the province of the minister's influence, and as if he had little or no responsibility connected therewith. And, no doubt, that is the one part of our Presbyterian worship where the relations of minister and congregation are exactly reversed—where the minister assumes a secondary place, and the people play the leading part. Yet even here the minister can, and actually does, exercise a controlling power, and he must be held responsible for much that is vital in the service of praise. In the first place, he selects the words which the congregation sing, and he may have a good deal to do also with the way in which the words are sung. And surely he who chooses the psalms and hymns and spiritual songs in which the worshipping people must express their love and penitence, their adoration and desire, may be said to keep the key of that department of the service in his own hand. It will call into constant exercise all the thought and tact, all the spiritual perception and delicate sense of proportion, all the capacity to reconcile individual preferences with general needs that you can possibly command. The spirit and effect of the entire service may depend upon it. The choice may make or mar everything else. It may depend largely upon you whether the devout longings of your fellow-worshippers find fitting channels or hopeless obstructions — find uplifting wings or clogging weights—in the words by which they struggle to bring themselves nearer God,—whether the song of praise you bid them sing will act as

oil to nourish or water to extinguish the flame of holy devoutness in the worshippers' hearts and souls. Therefore take heed, and give your mind carefully to the work of selection.

IV. With regard even to the *music*, the *tunes*, and the mode of *singing*—as all these things are very important factors in the serious problem of how to make the service of praise an effective and powerful spiritual instrument—the minister cannot divest himself of responsibility with regard to them. He can do much. He ought to study the matter carefully and from all sides, and, having done so, exert his influence in such a way as to secure all the advantages and reduce to a minimum all the evils inherent in the system. Success in this will depend, of course, a good deal upon the musical taste and general good sense of the minister, as well as upon the circumstances and susceptibilities of the congregation. It is therefore a matter on which it is not safe or, indeed, possible to lay down special rules or to tender specific advice. I would venture to suggest generally that one of the prime objects to be kept in view here is to enable and to induce as large a proportion as possible of the congregation to take part in the work of praising the Lord. Some may be hopelessly disqualified for lending their aid through utter want of musical ear, and through utter incapacity to produce a musical note. These must confine themselves to the work of praising God silently in their hearts. Yet, even for these few excep-

tions in a lesser degree, and for all their more highly favoured fellow-worshippers in a far higher degree, is it a matter of vital importance that the volume of song should be large and strong, and that in the one single instance, where everyone is called upon actively and personally to co-operate, as many as possible should heartily respond.

This consideration will in large measure determine the choice of tunes and the style of music. It will lead the minister to take care that these do not tax too severely or hopelessly transcend the powers either of appreciation or of execution on the part of the congregation. And it will have its due weight, too, in the choice of the means adopted for leading, guiding, and enriching the service of praise. It will enter largely into the questions, "Shall there be a choir to lead the singing? Or shall the sense of personal, individual responsibility and privilege in the congregation be fostered and developed by diminishing the official element as much as possible by encouraging each one, in as far as he is able, to act in his pew as a centre of sweet sound and musical influence to all around him, as well as by avoiding all more ambitious efforts in which the great mass of the congregation can have no active participation? Shall the aim be to have rich and varied materials of devout and musical expression for the congregation, or to confine these within bounds consistent with close familiarity and commensurate with the people's

powers of appreciation and performance? Shall the tunes for the most part be in harmony with the innate simplicity of our Presbyterian worship, and perpetuate the most sacred traditions of our Scottish past? Or shall they prepare for a larger and more elaborate scheme, and open up new sources for the further increase and enrichment of our streams of praise?"

And how far shall the peace of the congregation or the interests of musical culture and expression be allowed to have a preponderating influence in determining whether a musical instrument shall be used or not—whether anthems shall be sung or not—what form and proportions generally the service of praise shall assume?

V. We come now to the *fourth great division* in the public worship of God, viz. the *reading of God's Word* in the hearing of the people. Here, again, the choice entirely lies with the minister, and that fact involves heavy responsibility and the exercise of scrupulous care.

I am afraid no minister can safely count upon anything like a wide and detailed familiarity with the contents of Scripture on the part of all or even most of his people. One or two passages or books they may know fairly well; but for their acquaintance with the rest they are largely dependent upon what they hear read in church.

Whether, in view of that fact, the Church would not do well to draw up and prescribe a Lectionary; whether each minister should not prepare for

himself, and follow some regular and continuous scheme of Bible lessons that will conduct his congregation over the whole field; or whether he should vary his readings from the Bible continually, adapting them on each occasion to the subject of his sermon or to his own personal taste,—I am not here to say. As in the case of most systems which embody and express an idea of their own, a good deal can be said on both sides. But the one essential matter is that the minister realise his personal responsibility and treat his privilege as a sacred trust to be administered in the interests of his people. He will take care in his selection of Scripture lessons that no vital fact or truth shall be unrepresented —that what occupies the central place in Scripture shall bulk most largely in these lessons, and that the needs of the whole congregation shall not be sacrificed to the temporary effect of the sermon. And, finally, when the minister has selected, he will see to it that he, reading it in the hearing of the people with solemnity, clearness, and natural force, strive to treat it with due reverence, intelligence, and impressiveness. He will read those lessons as if he fully understood them, as if he really felt their power, as if he realised that he was delivering a divine message and unfolding a divine revelation, and will be so deeply impressed with the preciousness of the treasure he bears and with his responsibility to those for whom it is designed that he will forget himself and not unduly obtrude his own personality.

VI. Before leaving the field of the minister's action in the public worship of God, I would venture to make a suggestion which applies, not to any one particular part alone, but to all that influence and action as a whole. I have already had occasion to refer to the large variety of *ways* and *forms* in which the Christian instinct, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, dwelling and working in the Church, has embodied the great truths of the Christian faith and met the wants of the Christian life. These different efforts all fall into their place along with others of a definite, kindred class, and there present the features of one strongly marked distinctive type. Each is possessed and animated by some central truth. Each works out that truth into shape and expression on certain lines and according to certain laws, in harmony with its master idea and under the control of existing circumstances and surroundings. And so none is perfect and complete. Each has its own strong points and notes of distinction; but it attains these by the sacrifice of others which the rival systems have made peculiarly their own and divided amongst them. Each develops the resources of one ruling idea and concentrates its efforts on subjects that are in harmony with that idea. But, for that very reason, evidently, it must be so far lop-sided and partial, limiting its advance and conquests in one direction in the interests of a presumably more necessary progress and a more prized success in another. Episcopacy goes its own way, and moves

on its own lines; while Presbyterianism chooses its own separate route and method; each finding that its path has its advantages and disadvantages, its places smooth and rough. Congregationalism and Wesleyanism have both their marked excellencies and as marked effects—each of them inherent in the system. A liturgy with its rubric that prescribes every word and every detail in public worship has much to commend it for some minds and in some circumstances. Freedom of choice and flexibility of form and matter have also their strong claims and conspicuous merits. But you make your choice between any two contending systems. You cannot well or efficiently combine all the best features and strongest elements of both. In finally deciding to prefer any one of the two or more that present themselves, you must take that one with all its native imperfections, and make up your mind, when you do so, to forego many of the advantages belonging to the others.

I do not say you may not and should not seek to make yours as comprehensive and complete as possible, or that you may not and should not look round kindly and eagerly on every side and borrow hints and materials from every lawful quarter to supplement the defects and add to the beauty and efficiency of your own ecclesiastical home and its furniture.

But you must reverence and be loyal to the central idea and main lines of the system you have deliberately adopted. You must not do violence to its inherent genius, its inner law of

development. You must not struggle to combine incongruous features and mutually destructive elements. A certain measure of reconciliation and of mutual interchange is no doubt possible and even desirable. Every Church and system may learn much from every other, for no one has a monopoly of wisdom and excellence. But I have very little belief in a mere haphazard eclecticism or in a mere museum of disconnected treasures gathered from every field. If the new feature harmonises with the old, and the new element fits in with what we seek to improve, good and well. The result then amply justifies the addition. But take care lest the new piece agree not with the old that you seek to mend, or that the new wine do not prove fatal to the ancient bottles into which you seek to pour it. You have your Presbyterianism, with its hallowed forms, its deeply worn channels and lines of action, its own distinctive genius and spirit that embody and have had so much to do with the creation and fostering of all that is best and noblest in Scottish character and history. This is your spiritual home. Preserve and adorn it. This is your sacred heritage. Transmit it unimpaired, or, rather, increased. But don't destroy its individuality and organic unity by injudicious additions and changes. Do not lightly barter away the impressive simplicity and familiar forces of what has survived the cleansing fire, and still bears blessed fruit, for a nondescript mongrel substitute and for an undigested assortment of unrelated fragments. Take care lest, in

catching at the shadows of the new, you do not lose the substance of the old. Take care lest, by trying to reconcile things that are in their nature irreconcilable, you do not produce a mixture that lacks the better features of either, and combines the more objectionable qualities of both. English is a noble language, and so, too, is French. But I am not sure that a jumble of these two would commend itself as an improvement. The severe, chaste simplicity of Grecian architecture is pleasing and effective, and so is the rich variety and restrained luxuriance of the Gothic cathedral. But it would be a dangerous experiment to transfer the features of the one, and use them incautiously to heighten the beauty or remedy the defects of the other. Choose your style—there is no end of them, all in their own way and degree serviceable and admirable; but, having chosen it, be faithful and true to it. Do not try to tread two diverse paths or ride two badly matched horses at the same time. In the attempt you may bring yourselves and others to grief.

I have dwelt at perhaps disproportionate length upon this point, because I feel that we have been emphasising a very specially seasonable truth, and enforcing a very specially needful lesson. In this transition period of ours, when everything is in flux, and when wider experience awakens dissatisfaction with the old and longings after large reconstruction and improvement, it is well to recall the limits and conditions of all true reformation and wise change. The living organism will grow, and will demand new forms and new expressions of life

and action as it develops. And happy is the Church or the State that in such a crisis mingles caution with courage, that borrows judiciously and innovates wisely, that does not rudely break the continuity of life, but maintains a never-ending advance in which all the different stages are linked each to each by ties of natural piety. I know of few duties and responsibilities, both to the past and to the future, which should be more constantly kept in view, and more sacredly observed by the office-bearers of the Church.

The peace and efficiency—the stability and healthful progress of the Church—largely depend upon the judicious blending of tender love for all that is good in the old and familiar with glad readiness to recognise and appropriate what is still better in the new and strange.

VI. And now we pass to another department of the minister's public duty. If we moved before in the holy place, I think we may truly say that we now find ourselves in the holy of holies. The minister has not merely to conduct the ordinary services of public worship, but he has also to dispense in Christ's name the *Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.* And in these he certainly presides over the most significant and vital acts of Divine worship and of man's intercourse with God. Whatever views we may hold as to the character and efficacy of these sacred ordinances, we must feel that they are to be approached with special reverence and handled with special care. Our views, of course, are contained in the Westminster

Confession of Faith, and that presents the two Christian sacraments in a light that must strongly accentuate the celebrant's feeling of responsibility and awe. The place where the water of sprinkling stands, and where the bread and wine of communion are given and received, must needs be specially holy ground, and we must move there with wary feet and with disciplined and reverent hearts.

I spoke more than once before of the danger of the darkening of the mind and of the hardening of the nature by familiarity with sacred things and mere professionalism in the discharge of sacred functions. And, assuredly, if there is any sphere or scene of the minister's duties where this tendency is specially fatal and should be most jealously guarded against, it is here. The minister, before administering either of the sacraments, will adopt means of making it clear, both to his own mind and to all concerned, what the holy ordinance means and implies. But he will not be satisfied with clear light and definite knowledge. He will deal with himself and others so as to bring his whole nature and theirs into vital touch and lively sympathy with the inner spirit and visible form of each sacrament, so that he and they may feel and respond to all its impulses and appeals. In this way it will never lose for his own heart and soul its original freshness and power. And, for the same reason, not merely will he find for himself unceasing comfort and stimulus therein, but he will, by the help of God, assist, and not hinder, the transmission of these influences to others.

Let no minister presume to touch or handle these holy things until he has done his best by prayer, meditation, and study to prepare himself for dealing with them intelligently, devoutly, and with a lively measure of thankfulness and intensity of feeling.

I trust you will do your best, in the administration of the *Sacrament of Baptism*, to secure obedience to the law of the Church, and have it take place when possible in the house of God and before the congregation. Any other course robs the ordinance of much of its solemnity and empties it of much of its significance and stimulative force, both for parents and people. It deprives the whole congregation of one of the most potent opportunities and means of bringing home to them their privileges and obligations as baptized persons, and as keepers of the spiritual life of the little ones whom Jesus loved and called and blessed.

If you are happy enough to succeed in this, do not make the details unnecessarily formidable to the sensitive parent. Let the people be led to feel that their part is not one of merely passive onlookers, but that the sacrament has a permanent meaning and an ever fresh message for every one of them, by your addressing your exhortations and expositions to the whole. If, as is only too probable, you are only very partially successful—then do what you can to secure something like an intelligent conception of the nature and obligations of the holy ordinance by private instruction or otherwise, and to surround its celebration with an

atmosphere and an environment as congenial and stimulative as possible.

It may seem a very trifling matter, and no doubt in itself it is, but I would strongly counsel you to follow up every celebration of the sacrament of baptism, and to keep its memory green, by the formal baptismal card prepared and issued by our Church. It is much appreciated. It serves as a touching memorial of an eventful day; and, with its appropriate symbols and texts, it may act as a solemn covenant between the Heavenly Father and His children on earth.

VII. Nearly all I have said about the Sacrament of Baptism holds true, and that with increased force, in administering *the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*. Here the minister is himself communicant as well as celebrant, and, as the service is almost invariably public and more elaborate than in the other case, it is, if possible, still more essential that the minister should be in thorough sympathy with the spirit and genius of the service, that he should take special care to carry his people with him into the appropriate light and atmosphere, that he should use every endeavour to shield the scene from every disturbing influence, and make every detail contribute to the solemn effect of the whole.

A man cannot administer the communion aright to others who is not an intelligent, devout, and profitable communicant himself. For the sake of the flock you feed, as well as for your own nourishment, you must make every communion season a

time of very special personal preparation and self-examination. If you draw near yourself to God in this holy mystery with true penitence, lively faith, and fervent love, you may humbly hope to kindle some light and transmit some life and influence to others. If not, you may fear lest you darken their view and block up the channel through which God sought to convey to them His streams of blessing.

It is, I think, in the solemnisation of the two Christian sacraments that the minister will least appreciate the almost unlimited measure of liberty which his Church has accorded him, and will feel most keenly the need and benefit of some kindly guidance and helpful direction. It is in these two cases that it is most important that everything should be said and done with strictest regard to the teaching of Scripture and the views of the Church; with the most careful restriction of the minister's personality; with the most scrupulous observance of all that tends to quicken reverence and foster devotion. And yet these are, perhaps, the very two occasions in which it is most difficult for the minister to combat the disturbing influences and fulfil those essential conditions. And so it seems to me that here, if anywhere, there is a place, and, indeed, a call, for the collective wisdom, experience, and authority of the Church to supply some aid and secure some uniformity in a matter confessedly most delicate, and yet admitting, if not demanding, uniform dignity, breadth, simplicity and tender-

ness of treatment, by issuing some form and order for the celebration of the sacraments, either with permission, with strong recommendation, or express instruction to use it.

Whatever may come some day, that, however, has not come yet; and, in the absence of such an official guide, each minister must regard it as a matter of conscience to make his service of communion as complete, as impressive, and as thoroughly in keeping with the best traditions of his own Church and land as possible. He will remember that not merely the apostolic Church, in sympathy with the spirit and object of the feast of the Supper, met every Lord's day for the breaking of bread, but that the fathers of his own Scottish Church, both by precept and example, supported the frequent celebration of the communion, and therefore he will strive to maintain for it a sufficiently large and prominent place in the worship of the Church, and to awaken within his people a right understanding and due appreciation of its place and power.

The *degree of frequency* must be determined by local circumstances and personal considerations that will get their due weight from every wise and earnest minister.

So, too, with the *preparatory services* which usually precede and lead up to the act of Holy Communion. Nothing definite can be laid down with regard to these. It may be, however, affirmed generally that, properly conducted, they fulfil a very useful and, indeed, needful purpose, and that

the light which they shed and the stimulus they supply far outweigh any little risk of superstitious awe or danger of formalism which they may bring. Our Church has not so very many services, and our people have not so very many opportunities of being brought face to face with the most vital facts of their religion under the most impressive influences, that we should lightly or willingly reduce their number.

Of course the very utmost care will be taken to instruct the people as to the nature and claims of the sacrament of the Supper, and to awaken within young and old a keen sense of their responsibility and privilege in accepting the invitation and regularly observing the duty. The procuring and the dealing with *candidates for first communion* will demand very special attention, and will entail very special delicacy and care of handling, both individually and as a whole—both personally and in the class.

Here again, I must confess, I am sometimes tempted to look rather wistfully over our Presbyterian fence and to long to appropriate all that is consistent with our own system in the most helpful and impressive Confirmation Service of our sister Church. I do not mean the exact words or the precise forms, but the spirit and sense of solemn dedication which that service so opportunely and so touchingly expresses at that critical, susceptible stage. And I cannot see why all the most impressive features and all the most precious elements in that service may not be secured for

our youth by a right and careful adaptation of the *young communicants' class*, and of the public service for the solemn admission and welcoming of the catechumens. More should be made of this preparation and act of admission than is usually done. It should be rendered as memorable and as impressive as possible; and here again, as in baptism, the proceedings of the season should be followed up, commemorated, and accentuated in the First Communion card.

I suppose that in an ever increasing number of cases the difficulties of large masses of communicants and the desirability of emphasising the organic unity of the Christian family will be met by the adoption of *simultaneous communion.* I would earnestly suggest that whatever differences in the outer form of the celebration may be recommended or imposed by the circumstances of the individual case, as much as possible of what is best and most characteristic in our Scottish traditions be lovingly preserved and most faithfully adhered to. I do not mean the numerous tables, the long and multiplied table addresses, the host of assistant ministers, and the rivalry of competing eloquence and unction. I mean such things as the snow-white seemly linen cloth, covering not merely the communion table, but all the places where the communicants sit—the time-hallowed sequence and severe yet sweet simplicity of ceremony—the breathless solemn silence—the few yet fondly treasured traces of an unwritten rubric in the singing of the 35th Paraphrase and 103rd Psalm,

in the reading of the well-known passages from Scripture, in the repetition of the dear and sacred phrases, in the careful, deliberate disposition and crystallisation of everything around the central subject of Christ's love and death upon the Cross. I firmly believe that, when rightly and duly administered, no scene on earth can develop nobler possibilities and be at once so simply grand and so tenderly impressive as the celebration of the Lord's Supper according to the Scottish Presbyterian rite. I commend it earnestly and solemnly to your loving appreciation and wise, tender care.

VIII. Very closely related to the minister's teaching and directing the worship of the congregation is his work in training and educating the young in *Sunday Schools, Bible Classes, etc.* I do not know of any department of a minister's varied activity more necessary and more fruitful than that. In the changed conditions of our modern life, both in town and country, it becomes more clamant every year. Whatever the cause may be, and probably there are many, we can no longer count upon the same amount of Bible-reading or religious instruction in the family or in the public school as prevailed in the time of our fathers. And so, to ward off paganism and keep the light of Scripture knowledge from burning low or dying out, we must fight the darkness and set up centres of light elsewhere. The want is not met and supplied by any other agency. Hence the importance, or, rather, the indispensability, of the Church's Bible classes and Sunday schools. I do not affirm

that Sunday schools are perfect institutions either in their idea or in their practical working. They may in some cases tend to transfer, or, at least, confuse, the feeling of responsibility, and lead the parent to imagine that, because his child is being looked after by the Church, therefore he himself is relieved of the burden of personal obligation. And no one can say that the material is always so efficient, or the methods so excellent, that the results must needs be satisfactory. But all that simply binds the faithful minister to do his best to increase their efficiency and improve their methods, and meantime to use them thankfully and develop all their resources to the utmost extent of his ability.

He will take pains to discover and enlist the very best teachers, and direct his very best efforts to the creation of new and still more serviceable material. He will, as far as possible, take a part personally in the work—superintending and teaching, looking into and regulating details, encouraging the other teachers, and, where that is obtainable, supplying light and guidance by oral instruction or suggestive text-books. He must get to know the children themselves, interest himself in them and their work, and foster interest among the parents and all members of the congregation. He will do all this, remembering that he thereby secures many desirable objects beside the religious education and training of the children. He awakens new life and interest in those who act as fellow-workers along with himself. He exerts

through the agency of the school a healthy, quickening influence upon the still wider circle of the congregation or parish. Above all, he lays deep down the foundations of firm trust, friendly feeling, and sacred relations between himself and the coming generation. And, besides all that, he thereby finds the surest and most natural means of access to the homes and hearts of the entire community, the best preparation for dealing wisely and effectively with the hardest problems and sorest difficulties of his pastoral duties. Get to know the children; get to like the children; win the liking and confidence of the children;—don't lose your hold upon the children; and you have won more than half the battle. Through them you can reach and powerfully affect almost every point in the community; and through them, too, streams of light and sympathy and active help will flow back upon you from every part of the field.

You will take special care that the tie once formed between you and the child is not broken or weakened, and that very loving supervision is exercised over the young people when they reach that most critical stage when the restraints of youth and childhood begin to feel irksome, and the hopes and movements of a larger, freer life begin to stir within the blood.

I do not know any task that demands greater attention, tact, and wise handling than that of dealing with the lad and maiden who are rejoicing in their new independence, looking forward eagerly

to the joys and excitements of the coming way, in whom the moral has not kept pace with the animal development, nor the gains of wisdom, experience, and self-restraint with the impulses and longings to drink deep at the fountains and explore the unfamiliar paths of life. Bridges must be built over those miry swamps and impetuous, cruel rivers. Guides and sign-posts must be provided for that dangerous and perplexing stage of life's journey. Every effort, too, must be made to induce the youthful, inexperienced travellers to use those bridges and avail themselves of those helps, that so they may not perish or wander away, and so be finally lost.

Bible Classes, *Young Men's and Women's Guilds*, as well as other agencies that I need not particularise, are all recognised and useful methods of exercising that supervision, and extending that kindly sympathy and help which are so sorely needed during those perilous, eventful years. It will tax to the utmost your resources of love and strength, of patience and inventiveness, of self-denial and tact, to get a hold and keep your hold fast upon those young people who are so pathetically eager to show that they are no longer children, and try so blunderingly to prove it by copying in exaggerated form some of the harshest features and most intractable qualities of the full-grown. But it is work that has got to be done—done for their sake, for your sake, and for the Church's sake. No work will better repay any amount of care or trouble you may spend upon it. There-

fore throw much of your strength and energy into it. The old may prove very hopeless and irresponsive material; but there are still the young, who may be bent, who may be moulded and influenced, who may yet rise and respond to your appeals. It is the pleasantest, the most hopeful, the most remunerative work in which the minister can engage. See, then, that you do not neglect it—nay, that you make it your very peculiar care.

I cannot enter here into any detailed discussion of the methods and materials to be used by the minister in working this field. Take care, however, that in any of these agencies the moral and religious element be not pushed into the background, or thrust out altogether by the purely intellectual, athletic, or social. Let it bear a distinctive Christian stamp in every part, and let it breathe a distinctive Christian spirit all throughout. Let it not merely be a place and a work where you may confidently invoke Christ's presence and expect Christ's blessing, but where Christ is expressly sought and His will is set forth and embodied.

I have no clear light or definite views of my own on the disputed questions of *Children's Churches* versus *Children's Services* in the Church; as to the frequency or form of the latter—whether, *e.g.*, they should form part of the ordinary sermon, be a co-ordinate part of every service, or whether they should be reserved for special Sundays, and, in that case, how often

they should recur. But this I am clear upon, that the want really does exist, that the ordinary services for the old do not meet it, and that some method or other—perhaps some modification of the old system of catechising, to which I formerly made wistful reference—must be devised and tried for interesting the young and associating them pleasantly and profitably with the Church.

The very same kind of needs and the very same kind of difficulties present themselves with regard to *Prayer Meetings*, *Kitchen Gatherings*, *Mission Weeks*, or other special evangelistic efforts.

All these aim at supplementing the more formal and inflexible agencies of public worship and ministration in the house of God, and to extend the sphere as well as deepen the intensity of the more familiar and stated influences. No one instrument, however excellent, can equally serve all purposes or turn out equally well all kinds of work. Each operation needs its own special tool. What is unsurpassable in building up may prove a comparative failure in awakening and rousing. What can reach the ears and hearts of those who gather readily and statedly into church may have to be carried and applied by other means altogether to those who, from various causes, rarely, if ever, find themselves there. We are bound to try every method, and be resourceful and unwearied in devising and applying means likely to meet the ends in view. We must not merely sit at home and wait for the careless or the maimed to come

to the appointed trysting-place, and seek for the prescribed remedy to be administered in the regular and professional way. If we do, we shall assuredly limit fatally the circle and influence of our service to the flock; we shall leave many of the sheep of the Good Shepherd to wander away uncared for and unfed, and to perish far from the green pastures or the still waters whither our hand should have tenderly and diligently led them.

IX. I might say a word or two on the discharge of the ministerial functions on the occasions of *marriage* or *death*. But what can I say that will not readily occur to everyone, or may not need such extensive local modification as to render it of little or no use? I take it for granted that everything will be discouraged and avoided that may tend to vulgarise or diminish the solemnity of the function, and that everything will be done to heighten and intensify its impressive and sacred character.

In the case of a *funeral*, the service both in the house and at the grave will be short, dignified, and tender, yet without degenerating into personal eulogy or unbecoming personal details.

In the case of *marriage*, the service will aim at the same excellencies and avoid the same vices. The one great object the minister must have in view on such an occasion is to combat the spirit of levity and irreverence which haunts such scenes, and to inspire both the pair immediately concerned and the spectators with a due sense of the solemn and hallowed nature of the relation. No doubt

the very fact of the celebration taking place in the house of God, according to the law of our Church, should be of service in repressing the more objectionable features and strengthening the better influences of the occasion. But I am afraid it is not always successful, and, indeed, sometimes introduces other factors that are fully as repulsive as the old. It tends to bring in the element of publicity and display—of self-consciousness on the one hand, and of curiosity and criticism on the other; and when all that finds its field of action in the house of God, the result is neither edifying nor seemly. The balance of advantage is not all in favour of the Church nor all against the quiet and the sacred sphere of home.

X. And this suggests another point on which I may venture to say a few words of earnest, kindly counsel, and so bring to a close my remarks on this department of my subject. I refer to the reverence and loving care that are due to the *house of God* and to *the stated meeting-places for public worship*. You cannot, and you should not, try to dissociate the place from the functions that are carried on, and from the God who is sought and worshipped there. There is, and ever must be, a close and indissoluble connection between the two. You cannot deal lovingly or irreverently with the one without that reacting to the benefit or injury of the other. All worshippers are largely dependent for their associations and impressions on their surroundings—on the character and tone of their environment. And certainly

there was a time not so far distant in our Presbyterian Scotland when these influences were anything but favourable to the spirit and manifestations of reverence and devoutness. Fortunately things have changed immensely for the better since I became a minister. Churches now are, for the most part, at least seemly, if not beautiful, and the externals of worship are decent, if not artistically perfect.

No doubt the movement sometimes runs the risk of going too far and proceeding too fast—far outstripping the pace of our Scottish people, and introducing a symbolism scarcely consonant with our views of truth. The bow had long been bent so regrettably far in one direction before that in the rebound there may be danger of an exaggerated and equally regrettable recoil to the other. But that risk, inseparable from every popular movement, does not free the minister from the duty of welcoming and availing himself gladly and thankfully of every means of fostering reverence and quickening the consciousness of the presence of God. It only lays upon him a stronger obligation to guide it into appropriate channels, and express it in fair and suitable forms. He is the guardian of the house of God, and, so long as he acts with wisdom and tact, he practically determines the framework and the forms of worship. And he must not evade that responsibility or shirk that duty. He need not necessarily have his church or hall architecturally lovely or æsthetically perfect. It may be simple

and, homely in material, shape, and decorations; but he will at least see to it that it is scrupulously clean, conspicuously tidy, and bearing every mark of loving care. If he cannot have fair, pictured windows, or beauty of towering pillar and fretted roof, he can easily have, and ought to have, such grace and tokens of tender regard for the house of God as may be supplied by lines of sober colour or the presence of a few fresh flowers.

Fifth Lecture

THE PASTOR AND HIS FLOCK

I HAVE sufficiently indicated, by the place I have given and by the space I have devoted to it, the importance I attach to that part of the minister's work which centres around the house of God, and which embodies itself in special public functions. I am convinced that that must form the base of all his operations, and that he must consecrate the firstfruits of his time and energy to the preaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, and to the efficient discharge of his more distinctive ministerial duties. But, though these stand in the first rank, it does not follow that there are not other fields of service and other things to do outside the church, beyond the circle reached and affected by his preaching and official acts.

Let me point out shortly some of the chief reasons why the minister should not confine himself to these scenes of activity, or simply remain there waiting passively for those who may seek counsel and comfort where these things are

officially and statedly dispensed, but why he should go out and seek to exert and apply these Christian influences in *the homes and lives of all the people.*

In *the first place*, constant, familiar, and friendly intercourse with the people is necessary, because without it the people will never get to know and understand — to like and trust — their minister. The shepherd must be with his flock continually for many a day, in sunshine and in storm, through foul weather and fair, before they thoroughly recognise him to be their rightful shepherd, and be ready to accept his guidance and follow his voice. And, just in the same way, if the minister has any of the right stuff in him, and has anything that he can communicate to his people, it will take many a day of kindly coming and going, and many a week of close personal dealing with one another, before the people get the key to his character and admit him to their confidence and heart. They require to know and test their minister before they can finally make up their minds about him and his words. They must have seen him out of the pulpit and pulpit robes, met him in their homes and scenes of labour, watched and noted his tone and behaviour by their firesides, groped their way cautiously to the heart and inner life of the man, before they will appreciate him, look out kindly upon him, and regard him as a safe guide and trusty friend. The minister who stands aloof from the homes and interests of his flock will never gather around

himself the kindly affections and loving trust of a loyal people, and will thus rob himself of much of life's brightest sunshine and keenest joy. He is a fool for himself. But, more than that, he violates one of the most indispensable conditions on which a man can enter into right relations with his flock and discharge his duties effectively. You need not sow seed until the soil has been prepared to receive it. Without that preparation it will simply lie on the surface and be lost. So in the interests not merely of yourselves, but of your work, you must mingle freely and kindly with your people.

But, *in the second place*, without that constant and familiar intercourse you will never get to know your people, and so never have any right conception of the problem you have got to deal with or the best way of solving it. You may study human nature in books or in the abstract, but that will go but a very little way in helping you to understand and deal judiciously with the particular men and women with whom you have got to do. It is not humanity in general that you will have to comfort, to rouse, to guide, and to strengthen, but the inhabitants of a special district, with their own peculiar tendencies and surroundings, with their own distinct difficulties and needs. And you cannot acquire adequate knowledge and skill in handling any other way than by studying the living subject. You must go out and sit in their homes, be with them in their joys and sorrows, watch their ways, listen

to their views, and know them from the inside as well as from the outside, if you are ever to deal wisely and effectively with them, and adapt your words and efforts to their case. Without knowledge—local, special, and personal knowledge—your sermons may be true and excellent, but they will not hit the mark—they will not fit into the minds and hearts of those who hear. Your plans and proposals and methods may have many a distinguished merit, but they will infallibly want the one essential element of adaptability to the object towards which they are directed. You will preach far better, pray far better, direct the worship of your people far more profitably, and discharge all your official duties far more effectively, if you utilise in all these the light and experience you have acquired in your talks by the way, in your intercourse by the fireside, in your observation and experience of all their helps and hindrances.

Where there is little intercourse, and, therefore, little mutual knowledge, the minister may be compared to a physician who has never felt his patient's pulse or taken his patient's temperature, but merely guesses at the nature of the trouble, and so prescribes at random and works in the dark—and the congregation to a patient that has no confidence in his doctor, that does not understand his directions, and has no intention of following out his orders.

Or you may compare their relation to the intercourse of two men where the speaker does not understand either the wishes or the circumstances

of the hearer, and the hearer does not understand the speech or feel any personal interest in the action of the speaker. We can imagine something of the hopelessness and fruitlessness of such a looking at one another in the face, and of such an effort to deal with one another. And yet it can hardly be more unpromising or more unsatisfactory than the relations between the ignorant minister and the unknown parishioner.

But there is still a *third reason* why the minister must know and take measures to know the characters, the circumstances, and the experiences of his people. And that is because it is in the homes and by the firesides of those people that he can best carry on much of his best work. It is through personal touch with them that he can most effectually communicate any influences or impulses that he himself may have received from God. You may talk admirably and persuasively in the pulpit; you may act wisely and excellently in the inner official circle of your duty; but very many of the people are all the while at home, and so neither hear nor see. Sunday is only a seventh part of the week, and the joys and sorrows, the temptations and trials, of most men lie largely outside the sphere which is reached and affected by sermon or sacred services. And so, unless the minister goes out and seeks men and women in their homes, where they are rejoicing or grieving, where they are facing the hard realities of life, where they are falling or sorely in need of help, he will leave a very large number of his flock uncared

for, and a large portion of their existence untouched by Christianity's brighter light and holier influences. Certainly he will never affect anyone whatsoever in the most powerful and effective way of all—through the infection of personal touch, by the power of personal influence, by the sweet constraint of personal example. He can talk in the pulpit to those who come to hear; he can dispense the ordinances of religion to those who wait upon his ministrations; but only by going out and in among his people can he transmit to others what he has found himself, or work Christian elements into the texture of men's daily lives.

The minister who confines himself to the field of duty bounded by the church, not merely cripples and impairs all his work there, but miserably limits his sphere of beneficent action. He leaves a large part of his people and the larger portion of the life of all his people outside that sphere, and to everyone he denies the benefit of the force and impulses that come from individual dealing and personal intercourse.

I. We may therefore take it for granted that the minister will recognise the absolute need, both for himself and for his people, of regular and faithful *pastoral visitation*. But it is one thing to be convinced that something should be done, and another and a totally different thing to know how it should be done, or even how one should set about doing it. And so I may venture to say a few words on that subject.

(1) And the *first advice* I would tender to the

young minister is, "Set about that part of your duty *without delay*. Get to know the inside of the houses, the lives of your people, and the character of your parishioners as soon as you possibly can. Nothing will go right, and you will never feel yourself at home until you have done that." I grant that it is a somewhat trying and formidable task. Likely enough you will feel shy and awkward, and rather shrink from the ordeal of facing so many strangers and adapting yourself to so many varied circumstances. Yes; but it has got to be done. It is the absolutely unchangeable condition of your usefulness, and even of your happiness. And the longer you put it off, you will find it the harder to go through with it. Not merely will you feel shyer and shyer, but your consciousness of duty neglected and their feeling of hopes disappointed will pile up obstacles between the manse and the homes of your people. Therefore begin at once. The kindly sympathy that never fails to meet a new minister will smooth the way for you, and secure you a ready entrance and a hearty welcome in every house. And, when once you have found the way and overcome the first difficulties, you will find the duty become a pleasure. You will soon feel that you cannot live and thrive personally or ministerially unless the path between the manse and the parish homes is trodden with frequent and friendly feet every day.

(2) Again I would say, remember that every person in your parish has a claim upon you, and

therefore do not willingly leave any out, but include, as far as you can, every home and every parishioner in your kindly attentions. Go, if possible, to every house, and try to get into close personal relations with every man, woman, and child. Some will be found much more interesting, attractive, and accessible than others. The society of some will prove congenial and a delight; that of others will prove a weariness and a sore trial. But you are not there simply to please yourselves or indulge in personal preferences, but to do good and be a faithful minister to all the people. Take care, therefore, that you do not commit injustice and provoke well-founded criticism by unfairly and partially dividing your time and energy, devoting an undue proportion of both to those whom you find agreeable and neglecting those that are less acceptable. And yet, let it not be a strictly mechanical allotment either, assigning exactly the same fragment of time and care to each separate household and member of the community. One needs attention more than another. The circumstances of each at some particular crisis may establish very special claims upon the minister's sympathy and care. One may be more exposed to hurtful and dangerous influences than another, and so may need more guarding and protection. One may be passing through some special trial or stress of sore temptations, and so may require extra support and guidance. Many may dwell more habitually beyond the circle of ordinary means of grace, may be rarely in church,

infrequent in prayer or in the study of God's Word, and so may be more dependent upon the minister's dealings with them in their own homes. Many may be precluded by sickness or by other unavoidable restraints from seeking the minister, and therefore the minister must restore the balance by a more assiduous seeking of them. In short, the principle of division will not be selfish or mechanical, but one regulated by loving, thoughtful consideration of the wants of all.

(3) Again, let there be some *order* and *system* in your pastoral work. If not, there is sure to be a sad waste of time and energy. One part will get an undue share of your attention, whilst another will be as unduly neglected. You will not know yourself what you have done, or what still remains undone. You will need therefore to keep some record of your work and movements, and work according to some intelligent, definite plan. And yet I do not mean to say that you should conduct your pastoral visitations on a fixed and rigid system as if you were a tax collector or a friendly insurance company's agent. You must mix brains and heart, common sense and loving consideration of your people's interests and convenience, with your other elements. The plan must adapt itself to the people, and not the people to the plan. And, above all, you must take care, in your anxiety to discharge your duty faithfully and conscientiously, that you do not fall into a dull, plodding, mechanical routine, and do your work with rigid, unsparing severity as a task that has to

be got through, and is got through—but rather wearily, in tread-mill fashion—with little or no room for the working of the blessed, precious elements of genuine spontaneity, refreshing individuality, and the living power of personal affection.

I am afraid it is now too late to dream of reviving the good old practice of intimating from the pulpit a regular course of pastoral visitation in a special district on a certain day, and then finishing up by a gathering in some convenient centre where all are duly catechised, exhorted, and commended to God. I fear our people, in their changed circumstances and habits, would not appreciate or brook such a return to the old ways. And, what is more, I am not sure but that a still more excellent way may not be devised and used. The old was very apt indeed to degenerate into a dead form both for ministers and people. Perhaps it disappeared and was buried for the simple reason that the life had utterly gone out of it, and that it no longer served the purpose it was originally designed to serve. But new conditions demand and will create new methods. And whatever enables you to reach most of your people and make your influence felt in the largest number of homes—and that in a natural, kindly, effective way —is the best for you. I must say I have a strong preference for methods that leave the relations between minister and people as simply human and natural as possible, and that import a minimum of starch and artificiality into their intercourse.

(4) And this leads me to say something about the *spirit* and *disposition* in which you should approach and carry on this unspeakably delicate, difficult, but necessary and fruitful work.

And here we reach and touch the heart of the whole matter. It is the man, and the spirit which dwells and works in the man, that, under God, imparts all the life and virtue to pastoral work. It depends upon the motives that impel you, the objects you have in view, the tone and temper in which you enter the homes and deal with the individuals, how much benefit will be derived from your efforts,—whether, indeed, any blessing whatever will follow from these or not.

The great leading principle and impelling motive of all your dealings and intercourse with your people will be a desire to benefit them morally and spiritually, to bear God's message, convey Christ's influences, and through these awaken their spiritual life and bring them nearer God. I do not say that the carrying out of this great primary aim will not admit, and, indeed, necessitate, the inclusion of many other subordinate aims, as well as the pursuit of many objects not specially and distinctively religious. But a minister must never lose sight of, or cease to set in the very forefront of all his ambitions his supreme duty and privilege of interpreting God's will to men, bringing men into touch with God, and working out the saving, healing purposes of Jesus Christ. And so, as he preaches and prays and administers the sacraments under the consciousness of this

duty, and under the pressure of this mission, he must let the very same sense of religious consecration and responsibility, of being a messenger of God to men, and of being a servant of Christ for men, attend him into every home and company, colour his actions and relations, and determine his attitude and words. Everything inconsistent with this must be avoided and proscribed. Everything in harmony with it and helpful to it, in however subordinate a way, should be welcomed and allowed its due weight and force. And, in carrying out his purpose in that sphere, he will act as the true Shepherd acts—he will deal individually with each member of his flock. Every soul is so far a separate unit, with its own individual worth and life, with its own special difficulties and needs, with its own peculiar hopes and fears. And the minister must distinguish, and not deal with them roughly in the mass. He must think not merely of his parish, but of each separate house in the parish. He must not deal with indefinite generalities, but single out each man, woman, and child of the community, and treat each as if he were his only patient, and adapt his treatment carefully to the circumstances of the special case. The very distinction and superior efficacy of all personal and private dealing with his people just lie in this, that, whilst in the church and from the pulpit he has to deal with them as a whole, sinking, for the most part, individual peculiarities in the common elements, in the homes or in his private intercourse he can discriminate between

the different cases, and choose words and methods, tone and application, exactly suited to the requirements of each.

And yet we must not push this principle too far, and make its exaggeration an idol or a hindrance. For, though each soul has its own independent life, and must be dealt with accordingly, yet there is, too, a certain interdependence of spiritual life and influence that we cannot safely ignore or neglect. God, for instance, has set these solitary souls in families, and has linked each to each by the sacred, strong ties of home life and human relationship. And, if we would work wisely and effectually, we must take these things into account. We must work on those lines. We must take advantage of those forces, and enlist them into the service of Christ. We must adopt the home, the family, the natural relations, as the basis and guiding lines of our work in the parish, using those ties as means of drawing one after another to Christ, and as channels for transmitting spiritual influences from heart to heart and from soul to soul. We must follow the paths that God himself has made, and utilise the forces which God himself has created and put within our control.

Indeed, it is only by utilising this natural grouping of the population, and this mapping out of the entire field, that we shall be able to reconcile the necessity of dealing with large numbers with the other necessity of distinguishing between them and bringing specially appropriate

forces to bear upon each. Each family and household furnishes a centre or nucleus around which the different units dispose themselves. Each one of these little worlds has ties and channels of communication with many others, so that from these central points we can influence directly each member of that inner circle, and also transmit that energy over a very considerable area. In this way our work is greatly directed and facilitated, and our effective powers greatly multiplied and increased. Deal with the parent, and you make all the children feel your impulse. Deal with the master and mistress of a household, and the effect will be transmitted to every member of that household. I do not say that that will dispense with more personal and individual dealing, but it will largely supplement and reinforce it.

(5) As for the elements of *success* and *efficiency* in your personal intercourse with the people, the old difficulty here crops up again. On the one hand, if the root of the matter really be in you—if you are really interested in your parishioners and in your work, and if you have any right conception of what that work is—you will not need many specific rules as to your demeanour or mode of dealing with your people. Your love to them, your sense of responsibility, your brotherly feeling, will awaken and quicken your instinctive perception of what is fitting or unfitting—what will help and what will hinder your work. A cultivated Christian gentleman, as every minister is supposed to be, will not need to be told that

he must act in such and such a way, or avoid such and such offences against courtesy, common sense, and good taste. He will instinctively exhibit the qualities and adopt the measures which tender consideration for our fellow-men suggests, and which Christian love sanctifies and intensifies. Besides, no true man with any character or individuality in him will be content to wear other people's clothes or move in other people's grooves. He will express his love and interest in his own peculiar way, and will put his own characteristic tone and touch into everything. It will be all the better of that distinctive element. He will work all the more efficiently because he works naturally. It will be all the more acceptable because it is not wholly impersonal and colourless, but is part and parcel of the man.

Yet, on the other hand, it may be well, if not absolutely necessary, for you to impress upon yourselves, and keep very distinctly before your minds, that there are certain qualities which are essential to the Christian pastor, and which should be present in all his words and deeds.

(6) For instance, you must not merely have your *heart in your work*—be thoroughly interested in your parish, and care tenderly for your people—but you must let all that be clearly seen and deeply felt. It must reveal itself in your look and talk and intercourse. It must impart a decided warmth and heartiness to all you do and say. You are the chief parishioner, and it should be evident to all that no one knows and no one loves the parish

more than you do. You are the friend and brother of all, and everyone should realise that that proud title is not a mere name, but represents a reality —that you are in very truth the loving, willing servant of all for Christ's sake. In whatever way you manifest the deep-seated feeling and animating spirit—and different men will and must show it in very different fashions,—no one in the parish should have any room for doubt as to what your feeling and purpose toward him are, and whether your sympathies and likings are with him or not. They should all have as clear and abundant reasons for knowing and believing that your hearts are in their keeping as the members of your own family and household. Get rid at once and for ever, I earnestly beseech and implore, of the false, unworthy, and fatal idea that your parish is simply your freehold, that parishioners' interests must be subordinate and subservient to yours, and that you have as minister any interest apart from their welfare, or any ambition save that of becoming more and more helpful and serviceable to them. Never for one moment lose sight of the fact that you are there to spend and be spent for them, and that they are there, not for your convenience or benefit, but to be cared for and served by you. And let them feel that you know and thankfully own this.

(7) I need hardly urge you to carry *tact* and *dignity* into all your personal dealings with your people. Love and earnestness will beget as large a measure of *tact* as can possibly grow in the soil of the worker's nature. Where there is no appear-

ance of such fruit, advice or remonstrance from outside will do very little good, and we must just earnestly commend such an unpromising subject to the grace of almighty God. As for *dignity*, it must be real and natural, not clerical starch or official stiffening. Right conceptions of his office and of his responsibilities will generate the right and only valuable kind. Remember that the dignity of speech and manner which springs out of seriousness of purpose and Christian refinement of nature is unspeakably precious. But see to it that your dignity is genuine, and flows out of the right source. The counterfeit and assumed will soon be detected, and will only offend and repel.

(8) I do not think that anyone is likely to be too kind and sympathetic and self-denying, but he may forget to combine all these with the indispensable antiseptic of *discrimination*, *firmness*, and *strength*. He must be kind, but not foolishly kind. He must be gentle, but not indiscriminately gentle. He must be ready to sacrifice himself for all, but he must not sacrifice the interests of principle, righteousness, or truth for anybody. He must be true to his Master, to his mission, and to the real welfare of his people. He must be able to distinguish between good and evil—between truth and error. And when he has distinguished, he must be ready to defend the good and oppose the evil. He must be ready to uphold the truth and refute the error. His very love and sympathy and pity must pledge and steel him to be inflexible, stern, and uncompromising when there is real need. For love of good implies hatred of

evil. 'Sympathy for the sufferer implies indignation at whatever inflicts the suffering. Tender pity for the sinner implies horror and impatience of the sin. You will therefore show and prove your deep, true, enlightened Christian love to your people, not by a weak, undiscerning toleration and approval of everything and everybody, but by treating sin in every form as your own and your people's enemy, and by speaking truthfully and faithfully as well as lovingly and tenderly. You will plead and encourage; but you will also exhort and warn. Nay, if need be, you will reprove and denounce. You will seek to save your patient, if possible, by preventive measures and kindly care; but, if his case demands it, even by the most drastic medicines or by the surgeon's unsparing knife. Only take the utmost care that you do not rashly confound yourself with your cause or with your Master.

Take the greatest heed to exclude any mere personal element from your judgment or your course of action. Do not mistake temper for zeal, cantankerousness for piety, or personal irritation for moral earnestness and religious faithfulness. Keep diligent watch over your motives and aims, and don't deceive yourselves with the idea that you are glorifying God and doing your duty to men, while all the time you are possessed by an unclean spirit of selfishness, and are animated by impulses upon which Christ has never laid His sanctifying hand. It is a temptation to which ministers are specially exposed, and to which they have been known to give way—even in the

pulpit, not to say outside the church. It is a very insidious and a very fatal tendency, both to the minister's own nature and to his usefulness. Don't let it get the better of you, and hurt you either as a preacher or as a pastor.

(9) Another *advice* I would press upon you is—Keep as vivid as possible your consciousness and sense of the vital connection between *your work in the pulpit* and *your work in the homes of your people.*

It is not enough by any means that the law of action and reaction of one upon the other should be allowed free play. It is not enough that it should be left to itself, and the one should be permitted to affect the other, as it is sure to do. But you should encourage and foster this mutual action. You should seek in the parish life and parochial experiences for material and motive and stimulus for your sermons, your prayers, and all your appeals. And then, in your public utterances and actings in the house of God, you should have your eye and mind upon the world without, and try to frame the one so as to meet the wants and avert the dangers of the other. You should keep a sharp lookout upon the state of matters as you move up and down the parish, and take careful note of what evil influence needs to be combated and what better tendency requires to be encouraged and strengthened. And then, when you go home and begin to prepare your work for Sunday, adapt your words and the tone of your addresses

to the object you have discovered to be specially urgent, and let the service in the house of God fit into the lives and supply the wants of the people down in their homes through all the week. In this way you will find outside a firm basis of reality and experience for every sermon, and let every sermon supply definite light and stimulus to the actual perplexities and relations of daily parish life.

And so the state of each individual patient and of the whole community will be properly diagnosed and accurately known, and the right medicine and most judicious treatment will reach and be applied to each. The minister will go out and pass from home to home, that he may ascertain what comfort or reproof, what instruction or warning, his flock need, and he will return to his study to gather from the Word of God and from the storehouse of remedies in the life and teaching of Christ what he may offer for their healing and quickening when men come up to seek relief and guidance from God. Both Sunday and Saturday, both work and worship, will be the better of this close association and mutual interworking.

II. But how, it may be asked,—how is parish visitation to be carried on? What is a minister to do or say when he goes round his parish and begins his pastoral work in his people's homes?

This is no doubt a very vital question, and one that it is very hard to answer. Parishes are so different, the circumstances of one household vary so widely from those of another, and what would

be natural and easy for one minister would be forced and all but impossible for another, that it is utterly hopeless to suggest any course that will commend and adapt itself to all.

(1) I think, however, that we may safely say that there are *two extremes*, both of which must be avoided. On the one hand, it is quite plain that all the intercourse must not be of a simply secular and ordinarily social kind. There must be some measure of a *religious element* in it, and always a *decided Christian tone and temper*. The motive, the aim, the spirit, and the quality should invariably be that of the servant of Christ. There is no reason in the world why he should not talk of the weather and of the crops, why he should not discuss local or personal interests, why he should not speak about business or pleasures or politics. *They* will, and *he* must in ordinary courtesy; and there is very sufficient reason why he should. But he is there for a special purpose, and he will not lose sight of his purpose. He has a work to do, and he will not forget or neglect that work. And so he will try to make even the conversation on familiar and worldly topics lead up and minister to higher ends. He will at least take care that he discourages everything that is out of harmony with truth and kindness and purity; and that his own words are thoroughly saturated with the spirit of Christ. But ever now and again an opportunity will present itself when he can without violence introduce a more distinctively religious subject, impart a more distinctively religious tone and

flavour to the conversation, and deal more directly with the spiritual life of his people. There will be sickness, and he will pray and speak a few earnest, helpful words by the bedside. There are family trials, and he will take advantage of the open door, and commune with them in the inner chamber. There will be many an occasion cropping up in quiet talk and familiar intercourse that will enable him to speak in season and with effect the needed word of comfort, warning, encouragement, or reproof. And he must watch for these carefully, use them faithfully, and not let one of them pass by unimproved.

(2) But, on the other hand, he must use *discretion* and observe *courtesy* in all this work. I cannot see that a minister has the right to intrude himself or his ministrations into any circle or into any intercourse without due introduction and encouragement. I cannot see that it is at all likely to serve any good purpose or promote any desirable object to go through the formality of a religious service in every house where it is endured, to drag in religious subjects unnaturally, or suddenly assume the clerical tone and attitude, and force the conversation into theological channels. On the contrary, I am confident that such a course will effectually defeat its object. It will tend to render all intercourse utterly artificial and burdensome. It will shut and double-bar the hearts and natures of those who are assailed by it. It will convert prayer into a bugbear and religion into a weariness and a mockery. The minister who

carries out his pastoral visitation in that fashion and on those lines will neither do good nor get good in the homes and by the firesides of his people. He will get no hearty welcome there. He will never find his way into the inner life there. He will stand outside the secret places where they have taken shelter and barricaded themselves in. He will go away feeling that he has gone through his task and said his say, but knowing nothing more of their needs, having failed to get any nearer their hearts, and, it may be, having deeply prejudiced his cause and Master by his want of tender consideration and sanctified common sense.

I spoke before of the need for tact and wisdom and discernment. There are few things more helpful, and, indeed, absolutely indispensable to the minister than this discretion, this delicacy of touch, and this sense of the fitness of things. It will save him from blunders innumerable. It will guide him safely through difficulties many and perplexing. I said that such quick, unerring tact grows richest and readiest on the soil of a nature purified and quickened by Christian love and vital touch with the Saviour.

(3) But if that is its native soil, there is one thing that will greatly stimulate its growth and guide its action—I mean the *sense of humour*, the kindly perception of life's little ironies, the blessed power of relieving the darker tragedy of life by a timely laugh or a cheery smile. God grant that you may not be men of uniformly stern countenance and invariably solemn demeanour; that your words

are not always ponderous and professional, and that you can oil the grim, creaking machinery of life, when needed, with a little innocent mirth, or find relief in a kindly jest when you would otherwise have to bleed to death within. If you have not got it, I am heartily sorry for you and your people! How wearing and exhausting much of the intercourse of your life will be for you and for your poor, unfortunate parishioners! How constantly they will misunderstand you, and you them! How often, with the very best intentions in the world, you will misapprehend the real situation, and so speak the wrong word and do the wrong thing. How many a door of entrance, and how many a means of escape, will be inexorably closed to you! If you have been favoured with such a precious yet dangerous gift, thank God for it. See that you exercise it within proper limits and under the control of love; and take care that you use it for the good of your people, and for the furtherance of your sacred ends. Don't let it impair your dignity or give an edge to your weapons of offence; but let it brighten intercourse, cheer sadness, and add to your clearness of vision and your depth of insight.

(4) There is one question which still remains to be dealt with, and it, too, is one of the highest importance, but of great complexity and difficulty. The minister cannot himself do everything that needs to be done. He cannot single-handed overtake all the duties or meet all the needs. Even if he could, he should not work alone. There are

office-bearers who have an official responsibility; and every member of the church ought to fill some place and do some work. None should be allowed to ignore his obligations and merely stand and look on while the official agent is acting as his substitute. For their own sake and for the work's sake, everyone should be pressed into the service. And if so, all this means *organisation.* There must to a certain degree be a marshalling of the forces, a gathering up of the materials, a mapping out of the field, an orderly fixing of the posts, and a judicious distribution of the duties. The minister, *e.g.*, may teach and superintend in the Sunday school, but other teachers must supplement his efforts. The minister may, and should, stand at the centre of the whole movement, and keep his eye upon the entire field; but he must needs leave to many others the keeping open the watercourses and the guidance of the streams. This is right and desirable, even in a small parish and with few people; but it becomes absolutely indispensable when the parish is large and the people are many. Some measure of organisation there must be. The question is how much, and of what kind shall it be? Where, and how far, shall it be allowed to take the place of the minister himself?

The answer to this will depend upon the organising capacity of the minister, upon the magnitude of the task he has to deal with, upon the character of the materials he has got to work with, and upon the kind of work that has got to be done.

In some instances the need is imperative. In other cases demands are much less exacting. But in every case, I must confess, it is well to extend the personal action and influence as widely as possible, and to keep the parochial or congregational machinery within definite bounds.

(5) At least every care must be taken to make and keep the organisation as living and fresh and human as possible—not a dead mechanism, but a living body with a heart beating in its breast, and real blood coursing in its veins. And therefore the minister has not merely to direct his efforts towards securing the means and agencies for extending and completing his work, but to humanising and vitalising all these. The tendency always is to mistake activity and movement for fruitful influence—to imagine that because meetings are being held and agencies are being multiplied, therefore life is being fostered and natures are being educated and trained. I do not say—Reject or despise any of these helps and appliances that so largely extend the area of your action, and so beneficially multiply the number of your forces. Neither you, nor your work, nor your people can dispense with them. But do not make a fetish of organisation or machinery. If they are simply to be instruments, let a living, sensitive hand wield them wisely and lovingly. Don't let them get petrified or lose their freshness and flexibility. Take care lest the drying up of human interest and of personal feeling in them do not empty the operations of all their virtue and break the current of living force.

After all, mere bodily exercise profiteth little. It is only a true living man that can warm, and touch, and influence a brother. Heart must speak to heart, and soul to soul, else the appeal will not be heard, and the response will not be made. Don't trust too much or too implicitly to the number of agencies, or the imposing statistics of routine work that is being got through. Look carefully into its quality, and make sure that there is a living soul and Christian spirit stirring and moving in it all.

(6) Whether aided or unaided, whether by yourself or through the instrumentality of others, you will soon find that you have certain special foes and needs to deal with. No matter where your lot is cast—whether you are called to labour in crowded cities or in quiet rural parishes, there are certain evils that will at once confront you, and which will specially engage your anxious thoughts and most strenuous efforts. They will bar your way on every side. They will be found ravaging your people's homes and lives continually, and undoing —yea, worse than undoing—all your work.

One of these is *Intemperance*—the drinking habits of the people. You will not be a minister for a single week, or even for a single day, before you discover that a very large part of your work will be to combat the forces and repair the ravages of drunkenness. You will scarcely enter a single house or make the acquaintance of a single household in which you will not come upon some traces of its blight, realise that all your ministerial life will have to be one long struggle against that cruel

enemy, and that you must reckon with fiercest resistance from that quarter at every step.

Another of those great and monster evils you will find in *Impurity*. I know of almost nothing that eats so deep into the heart of society, and poisons so utterly all the streams of each individual life, as well as all the relations of the community, as this taint of *uncleanness*. It disfigures and corrupts the fair, sweet promise of youth. It infects and pollutes the sacred, pure atmosphere of home. It lays its desecrating, begriming hand upon the holy marriage tie and upon the sanctifying influences of the affections. It converts every scene of friendly intercourse and social mirth into a centre of corruption and a place of danger. It, almost more certainly and more rapidly than any other power, tends to harden the heart, deaden the conscience, and close the nature against God. It will never be out of your sight. It can scarcely ever be out of your thoughts. You cannot give it any truce or relax your efforts in the fight against it.

And, unfortunately, these do not stand alone. They are strengthened by other forces constantly at work, and which are hardly less numerous and less formidable. There are, for instance, the utter *absorption in business;* the wild race for riches; the gross materialism of the poor who have to struggle for existence, and of the wealthy whose hearts are filled and possessed by the world; the dreary dulness or feverish excitement that shuts up the soul in the dark prison-house of sense, and extinguishes all consciousness or memory or desire

of the higher world or of things unseen. You will find ears so dull or so stunned with other voices that they cannot hear or catch the voice of God or the pleadings of the Spirit. You will find eyes so dim or so dazzled that they cannot see, and will not care to look for things spiritual and divine. The world is ever with them. The material interests are all around them, occupying every faculty, engrossing every energy, taking possession of every hour, starving the spiritual life, thrusting out all religious interests, and killing all the organs of spiritual perception. In the war that you have to wage in the name and strength of God, you will find that, of all the bitter and dangerous adversaries that occupy the field and cause you disquietude and fear, these are perhaps the mightiest and most terrible three.

(7) Yet, though one cannot help singling out these three as among the most formidable foes that present themselves on the battlefield of our ministerial life, they and their fellows have, after all, their common origin in human nature, and owe very much of their energy to the circumstances amid which they spring up and display their destructive power. And so, if we can only deal effectively with the vitiated soil out of which they grow, or introduce a happy change into the circumstances that in a large measure tend to call them into existence and maintain their vigour, we shall be in a fair way to cut the noxious growth at its very roots and dry up the foul streams at their very fountain-heads.

It is in that direction that light begins to break and hope begins to dawn. Were it merely a hand to hand fight with those and similar monster evils, it might seem a hopeless and fruitless contest. But take and apply faithfully, tenderly, and wisely the remedies which Christ has provided and which the Spirit offers, and then the healed and quickened and purified natures will no longer be the prey or hot-bed of such baleful influences. Remove the predisposing causes that had such a large share in producing those sad effects, and, with the change in the conditions and surroundings, the effects will either disappear or present themselves in greatly lessened force and in largely restricted action.

On the one hand you have to try and bring to bear the mighty power of God, the healing remedies of Christ, and the sanctifying influences of the Spirit, with confidence in their efficacy and divine energy. On the other, you have to devise and foster and encourage all methods, not merely for the removal and lessening of the incitements and feeders of the evil tendencies, but for supplying counter forces and worthier channels. Kill out the weed by cultivating the corn. Divert the affections and energies from unworthy objects by supplying noble and attractive objects.

The carrying out of this policy will lead you into many fields lying a little outside your strictly ministerial sphere, yet in many a case furnishing the best and surest way to your ministerial ends. It will lead to your taking a lively interest in

such movements as have for their object improvement of the houses of the poor; dealing with the licensing laws; providing healthy amusements and innocent recreations, the spread of education and the elevation of taste. These things will not prevent you carrying on your more special work and going to the root of the matter by the means and methods you find in the gospel; but you will not willingly stand outside any movement that aims at making immorality or vice less easy and attractive, or rendering a pure, sober, unselfish life more possible and attainable. A great deal of your best work for your parish will be carried out on those lines and in those fields. And not the least among the advantages of that mode of action is that it offers a common platform on which you and less professional agents can meet and combine your forces and co-operate heartily for the same ends. Both you and they and the work will benefit by this meeting together and by this working in company. The artificial barriers which often separate the minister and his people will be broken down, or, at least, convenient passages will be opened up so as to admit of easy and pleasant intercourse.

It is not enough, either for the minister or his people, that he proclaim and that they listen to and receive the words which lay down the laws, the conditions, the duties and supports of the Christian life. Such standing aloof the one from the other is healthful to neither, and is, indeed, hurtful to both. The minister and his

people must meet on the common ground of life's joys and trials, life's work and recreations, life's hard problems and simple experiences. He will in this way work out and apply his methods and schemes. He will learn wherein they are defective or mistaken. He will be able to furnish men with an object-lesson as to how Christianity is to be reduced to practice and worked into the fibre and texture of life. He will be able to show them how a Christian man may hallow pleasures and amusements, and draw spiritual nourishment from hard work and sore trouble. If he is with his people wherever men and women rejoice and suffer and labour he should profit unspeakably by what he sees and learns, whilst they should derive no less benefit from his earnest counsel, his kindly stimulus, and his wise, tender restraint.

Sixth Lecture

OUTSIDE THE PARISH AND CONGREGATION

I HAVE hitherto been dealing with the Minister and his Work in the Study, in the Church, and in the Parish. It is around those centres that his life will move from day to day, and in those fields that his time and energy will mainly be spent.

But that does not constitute the whole of his world. His horizon cannot be bounded by the limits of his parish, and so our Church has not merely left room for occasional excursions beyond the parochial boundaries. It has not even contented itself with commending and encouraging them. It goes much farther in that direction. It actually forbids the minister to be always within the hedge of his own little vineyard, or run the risk of getting selfish and parochial-minded through forgetting the larger world outside and occupying himself exclusively with matters around his own doors. It enjoins and commands him to look upon the things of others, to interest himself in the welfare of the whole Church, and to import into

the stifling air and self-concentred views of parochialism some of the freshness and breadth which are to be found in wider spaces and in larger interests. It is one of the special features and excellencies of our Presbyterianism that it commits the care and government of the whole Church to all its office-bearers. Not only is each minister and elder permitted, but he is bound, to take part in the administration of the whole. In Kirk-Session, in Presbytery, Synod, and General Assembly, he is required to consider the needs, to meet the wants, to face the problems, and to superintend the work of the Church in its entirety or in its several divisions. We have no choice in the matter. We are *ex officio* members of these various courts, and we are responsible for the efficiency of these courts as really and truly as we are ministers of a special parish and responsible for the spiritual interests of that parish. I know well enough that the atmosphere of Church courts is not always accounted very healthy or stimulating. I am well aware, also, that the business of Church courts is not always very congenial and attractive. But instead of that furnishing a sufficient excuse for our standing aloof and shunning them, it may be regarded rather as a cogent reason why we should be more earnest and faithful in doing our duty towards them.

If men sometimes complain, not always without show of reason, that the temper and spirit of Church courts is by no means edifying, and that Church committees tend to beget a type of minister

that is not the highest or the most spiritual, does that not suggest that one of the principal causes may be that the great majority fail to take a kindly active interest in the business transacted there, and that the work must needs be left to the few, simply because of the listlessness and neglect of the many? One has no right to shirk one's share of time and trouble and then complain that the business of the Church is mismanaged, or that officialism is rampant in her courts. If things are not satisfactory there, it is the duty of every minister to attend and do his best to set them to rights. If the business is apt to fall into the hands of a very few because they, and they alone, are able and willing to bear the burden, the best—indeed the only—cure for such an evil is just for all to qualify themselves for taking an intelligent and effective part in the work, by showing a greater interest in it, and devoting themselves to it with greater care.

It is a grand idea which underlies and embodies itself in our Presbyterian system. It emphasises the responsibility and the privilege of every man. It maintains the vital union between the whole and each of its parts. It furnishes veins by which the blood may be conveyed from each separate member of the body to the central heart, and arteries by which life and energy may be transmitted from the centre to all the most distant parts. It supplies fields of exercise for all the different powers. It leaves no gift unappropriated or uncultivated. It allows no member or portion to forget its duties

to the whole, or to be deprived of the help and sympathy of all the rest. Not merely have we not yet exhausted all the possibilities of the system, but many of us have not even realised what infinite, inexhaustible capabilities lie there for those who are faithful and earnest in their discovery and use. See that when the time comes and the call reaches you, you play your part manfully and willingly. Your own welfare and that of your parish and the whole Church largely depend upon it.

In connection with this department of the ministerial work, I might add a word or two on the *advantages of frequent and familiar intercourse with your brother ministers.* It is to be regretted that, by the abolition of Fast Day and other services at communion seasons, the opportunities for this intercourse are now much rarer than they used to be. But, on the other hand, the facilities of travelling, the pleasant experiences of clerical clubs, the quiet, deep interest of conferences, and the more exciting and varied attractions of congresses,—all these, in some measure, make up for the defect. And it is well that they should exist and be largely taken advantage of. He must be a strangely poor minister who cannot teach you something, either by way of encouragement or warning. And he must be a prodigy of wisdom or conceit who cannot learn much from what others have done or left undone, from what they are or have failed to be. No one has a monopoly of light and capacity. No one has so little that he cannot communicate something worth learning to

those who wish to learn. It is not good for the minister, any more than it is for the man, to be alone—to have all things within himself, as the popular phraseology expresses it. After all, the personal and parochial stock is very strictly limited. The pasture will get poor, and the store of provisions will fail. We must go out and gather. We must import from other fields for the supply of the home wants.

You are, say, the minister of a quiet rural parish where the complexities of life are few, and where the forms of life are simple. But outside you come into the presence and under the pressure of the still harder problems that have to be grappled with and solved by dwellers or workers in city slums, in noisy factory, in grimy mine, or busy counting-house. Or you may have your sphere of duty in town or city, and know nothing of the peculiar difficulties and temptations of those who dwell and labour in the country. But up in those centres of Church life and action you meet with your brother from the quiet country manse, and hear what are the actual conditions of work and success amid that scanty population and in those slumberous scenes. And both the one and the other are vastly the better of having their mental horizon thus enlarged. Both are likely to become broader minded, tenderer hearted ministers of the gospel because they have looked over their own fence and taken note of the fact that far and near on every side there are other people besides their own who

have sore difficulties to face, and other workers beside themselves who have got tough problems to deal with.

Among the questions that will emerge into greater clearness, and so assume juster proportions in your outlook upon life, will be that of the *Church's duty and obligations towards the whole nation*, with its vast masses of population and its endless complexities of condition. What is the Church to do with the poverty and ignorance, the comfortless homes and degraded lives of the destitute? What is the Church to do with the self-indulgence, frivolity, and heartless worldliness of those rolling in wealth? How is it to deal with the animalism, materialism, and godlessness of both? How is it to sweeten the bitter, cleanse the impure, and reconcile the discordant elements of society? How is it to bring all the weak and suffering and diseased to the great Physician, and pour the healing influence of Christ into the whole body politic, and into every home and life within our beloved land? What methods is it to use? What agents is it to employ? How shall it combine and direct its forces? That, indeed, is not a different question from that which you will be constantly dealing with in your own pulpit and in your own parish. But it is a larger, a harder, and a more complex form of the question. You may make some valuable contribution to its solution both by what you have learned and by what you have done in your own limited sphere. But

when you meet it in its larger proportions and in its more formidable aspects out on the higher and wider field, the sight of its magnitude, the consciousness of the vital issues at stake, and the demand for prompt, wise, resolute, united action will deepen your seriousness, foster your inventiveness, call forth your energy, and develop your power. You cannot remain men of simply one idea or continue looking out at the mystery of human life merely through the narrow chink of some confined interest and limited experience, when you have to confront, study, and deal with the heathenism of great cities, and with the deadening influences of rural life; when you are brought face to face practically with the life and death questions of drunkenness, the relations of employer and employed, factory, mine, and agricultural labour, the amusements and recreations of the people, the religious education and training of the children, the providing of healthy and decent dwellings, the securing of occasions and means of moral and spiritual culture. The very knowledge that such difficulties exist and demand to be dealt with is good for us all. The feeling that, as ministers of Christ and of a national Church, we are pledged to do our very utmost to meet those needs and solve those problems is more stimulating and quickening still. But the effort to *deal* with them seriously and earnestly, and the strain necessary for that effort, together with the humility, the sad self-distrust, and the glad trust in God which come from failure and discomfiture,

are most precious of all. They constitute the most important and fruitful part of our education. They bring into play all the man that is in us, and make us more efficient servants of Christ and more helpful brothers of men.

But the range of our interests and of our action is not confined to our own land or Church. We are swept onward and forward by the current into far wider seas and towards far more distant shores. From our manse we look out upon a comparatively narrow field, and think only of the heads of this and that home, the dangers of this and that individual. Even in the Presbytery we catch only a dim view of a limited district, with its common interests and conditions of life, its familiar hills and streams. But, when we go farther afield, and mount up higher, we not only look out over all broad Scotland and realise that we have duties to all those homes and all their inhabitants, but we descry a larger work of many tongues and many nations all linked to us by sacred bonds, and all claiming from us sympathy, comfort, and help. And I do not think that the spiritual education of any man, not to say any minister, approaches anything like completeness that does not include this element, and that has not been touched, widened, intensified, and solemnised by the spectacle of a whole world waiting for light, longing for guidance, hungering for comfort, and pining for new health. I do not see how anyone can realise the vastness and intricacy of the problem—the helplessness and hopelessness of ordinary remedies and provisions,

the inexhaustible store of light and life, and hope and healing, which lies in the person, work, teaching, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ,—who has not looked upon the world-wide swelter of misery, and who has not learned from thoughtful study and careful observation the wonderful adaptation of God's scheme of mercy to all the world's needs. And I cannot conceive of any minister or congregation rising to the level of their responsibility and privilege, or developing all their faculties of love and effort, devotion and service, until they can take in the size of the land, the number of the sufferers, the magnitude of the evils, and the endless application of the healing influences for which they are responsible to God and man.

It has often been said, and said with undoubted truth, that much of the force, the resourcefulness, and the large thoughtfulness of our race is due to our world-wide empire and to the calls which these responsibilities continually make upon each bearer of the white man's burden. He has countless obligations to fulfil, endless emergencies to meet, large interests to guard, hard and knotty problems to solve. And all this consciousness of a great part to play, a hard battle to fight, and a grand sacred trust to administer has made the British mind swift to see, the heart quick to feel, the hand and arm strong to act. And much the same conditions exist in the higher sphere of the spiritual life.

It is service in this larger world and wider field that gives any minister or member the far-away

look, the depth of insight, the comprehensiveness of view, the tender sensitiveness of conscience, which go to make a fully grown, fully developed Christian. Even to have a son or a daughter far away in foreign lands, and to have some relative or friend associated with countries and interests across the seas, widens the mind, enlarges the nature, and enriches the life. And something of the same result follows when any of us live and move in a world not confined to our native hills or even to our fatherland, but stretching far away over land and sea, and including within itself the fortunes and destinies of black and white, of bond and free, of Christian and heathen.

Missionary knowledge, interest, and effort are as light to the eyes, as breath to the lungs, and as marrow to the bones of the servant of Christ, whether that man stands in the pulpit or sits in the pew. See, then, that you do not lower your own vitality by letting anything come between you and this source of quickening. See, too, that you do not defraud your people of this stimulus and inspiring force. Give your mind and time to the subject. Devote your energy and means to it. Let it colour and affect your work and preaching in your parish. And let your people share in that knowledge, in that interest, and in those efforts. Let the missionary spirit in your own little world bear some relation to, and some fruit also for, the missionary work in the great, dark world without. The one will mightily help and invigorate the other. I do not mean that these are, by any

means, the only, or even the strongest, motives to take active part in missionary work. I take for granted that every Christian, whether office-bearer or not, will in this matter feel that he cannot stand aloof when Christ is appealing and commanding, when our love and loyalty are in question, and when the interests of millions of souls are dependent upon our action. But it is well to note that God, in this as in everything else, is a liberal Paymaster, and that in blessing others we ourselves shall be blessed. The spiritual health and strength of many a minister and of many a parish largely depend upon what these feel and undertake and do for Christ's cause in the lonely heathen world beyond their homes and land.

There is another set of teachers and educative influences which you will meet, and, I trust, gladly avail yourselves of, when you pass beyond the limits of your parish or district and take part in the life and movements of the larger world around. Even in the higher courts of your Church, where the atmosphere is so much wider and freer than at home, you are still restricted to a mere section of Christ's Church, and still look out at things from the old familiar point of view. But in the course of your dealings with common interests and world-wide issues you will often have to overstep the boundaries of your own special division and mingle with those belonging to all *other branches of the great Christian army*. You will meet on friendly terms and on common ground with members and

office-bearers of all the other Christian Churches; and you will have an opportunity of hearing their views, studying their methods, and profiting by their experience; and you must indeed be singularly constituted if you do not find yourselves vastly the better of this intercourse, and that in many different ways. I don't know of any Church in Christendom that has not something—probably a very great deal—to say for itself and to teach us. They have thought of plans, tried ways, used agencies, worked out schemes, and tested methods that are unknown, or at least unfamiliar, to ourselves. They have been diligently exploring other fields, trying other devices, working out other ideas, recording the success or failure of experiments differing widely from those that we ourselves have had means and opportunity of making. And it will be strange if any one of you can pass over from your own home and territory into theirs, and sojourn even for a little while there, with open eyes and observant mind, without making many valuable discoveries and adding considerably to his store of ideas and practical expedients.

Take, for instance, the Churches of America and Australia, which have in their hands the fortunes and destinies of the same great Anglo-Saxon race. Take the great sister Church of England, with its ancient traditions, its venerable forms, its complex structure and its countless activities, moving on lines so widely parted from our own. Or take the two great Presbyterian Churches of our own land—now happily united,—so similar to our own Church,

and yet so different; so closely allied to us, and yet so far apart; dominated by the same spirit and aims, and yet working out the self-same problems under such different conditions. Do you not feel that there must be an endless amount of new and valuable facts and experiences and suggestions waiting there for those who are eager to learn and longing to find out how God's work on earth can best be done? I am sure that he who wanders through that vast exhibition of the Churches of Christendom, with all their systems and methods and products, and takes intelligent, careful note of what meets him there, will return to his own ecclesiastical dwelling-place with ideas and hints and memories that will largely enrich his Church's life and his own individual action.

But it is not merely that new *light* will be found shining in those fields beyond. A visit to these will also generate new *heat* and kindle new *life*. You will find ardent souls there who will feed the flame of your own enthusiasm. You will come into touch there with new centres of intense spiritual life that cannot fail to add to the intensity of your own. You will fall in with congenial spirits there that will add immensely to the fervour of your own zeal and to the momentum of your own activity. And it may be that in that unfamiliar land you will discover stores of fuel to replenish the fire of your Christian devotion, and find the very stimulus you needed to give you new hope and strength. Even granting that the same things might possibly have been found by those

who sought for them diligently nearer home, yet novelty may have sharpened the vision, and the strangeness of the aspects in which they present themselves may communicate new force and interest to the old familiar truths.

And there is a *third* benefit, even greater than either of the other two, which you may reap in that field; and that is not an increase of *light* or *life*, but what is far more precious, an increase of *love*. We are too apt to confine our interest and sympathy to our own Church. We have no eye or ear for the grand good work that is going on continually around us in other divisions of the great Catholic Church. Indeed, we are so often brought into collision and rivalry with their forces and agencies that we are often sorely tempted to think of them unkindly and judge them unfairly. But a little intercourse and a short sojourn with them not merely have wonderful power to soften those asperities, but to foster brotherly love and clear away misunderstandings. One cannot meet much with the men of those other Churches without recognising in very many of them true brothers and fellow-labourers in Christ Jesus. And we cannot study and make ourselves familiar with their work and its results without being impressed with its high aims and beneficent influence. We went to them almost expecting to find enemies undermining our defences and counteracting our efforts; and we find, in place of that, men with the same difficulties, the same problems, the same objects, and the same ambitions as ourselves—owned by

the same Master, animated by the same spirit, devoted to the same cause.

And our hearts warm to them, our sympathies go out towards them, we recognise and hail them as brethren, and return to our own sphere of action comforted and strengthened by the feeling that the Master has many other servants besides ourselves, that the issue does not depend upon us alone, but that other strong hands and warm hearts are working hard for the discomfiture of evil and for the fulfilment of God's purposes of mercy to man. Another brave and well-disciplined division we find is in the field over the boundary river, or beyond those intercepting hills. Another and yet another is on the march, though all unseen, to face the common enemy and support the common cause under the one Commander-in-chief. And does not the thought inspire new hope and confidence? Do we not march on our way with new courage and assurance of success? And does not the sense of the common danger, the common aims and the common sacrifices beget a feeling of true companionship, and substitute, for the jealousy of the bitter rival the sympathy and affection of the faithful comrade?

And, then, when you return to your parish and people, and have to face some of the difficulties which our sad ecclesiastical divisions and strifes have sown broadcast over Scotland, you will be better able to deal with these in a spirit of Christian wisdom and forbearance. You will not be tempted to assume a superior or patronising air,

or treat those outside your own communion in a spirit of suspicion or indifference. You will feel and speak and act towards them all with the invariable courtesy and fairness and charity that are due from every member of the great Christian family, and from every servant of the great Divine Master to every other. And you will further remember that the very advantages and privileges of your position, as officers in a national Church, pledge you to greater self-effacement and tenderer consideration of the feelings and dignity of others. You will therefore be freed from the temptation of playing the foolish part of lord and master in your own little parochial domain, and so covering your Church with ridicule, and rousing against her the prejudices and dislike of all outside her borders. You will rather conciliate for her and for yourself their kindly feeling and tender love. In this case you will find that the paths of duty and of policy exactly coincide. By your courteous, conciliatory, and brotherly action you will promote Christian unity and Christian charity, and, at the same time, sweeten your own ministerial life and strengthen the position of your Church.

And the same law holds good *in other fields*, and applies with equal force to *other matters*. You are ministers of a Christian Church, stewards of the good, glad gifts of God, ambassadors of Christ, and servants of the Master for man's sake. And I am certainly not disposed to underrate in any way the dignity and importance of your position or mission. But still, after all, you are

not the only workers in the world for God and in the interests of humanity. You are only a few among many. I do think that none have such a glorious work to do, or such mighty forces to consecrate to the work. But still many are working in other parts of the field, and are using other materials and instruments for objects, if not identical with yours, yet closely allied. Some are giving their time, their money, and their energy liberally and heartily to the task of making the outer conditions of life less hideous and unfavourable, and more kindly and attractive. Some are busy and unremitting in their efforts to lighten the burden of labour and take the bitterness out of the cup of poverty; others fight all day and every day and all life long against ignorance, disease, and physical ills. They may not penetrate to the root or deal effectively with the causes of things.

They may never reach the heart or centre, but spend their time and strength on the surface and around the circumference of the evils.

But they are, in their own measure and way, fellow-workers with Him who has tender care for the body as well as for the soul, who has established a vital relation between our temporal and our spiritual interests, who has made this world and life the scene of probation and the training-ground for the higher life and for the world to come. He who fed the hungry, relieved the suffering, and had tender sympathy even with the social joys and little anxieties of life, gathers

all these workers and all these modes of action under His sheltering wing, and lays His consecrating hand upon every one of them. What God, then, has created and cleansed and owned, do not thou call or treat as common or unclean. What makes man happier and renders morality and religion more possible, do not shut out from the Christian circle as undeserving of your countenance and support. Forbid them not because they do not identify themselves with us.

I know of few things that more certainly and more deservedly tend to beget prejudices, and even irritation, against the office and work of the Christian minister than this priestly reserve and aloofness—this dwelling alone and apart from other workers and combatants on some lofty height of fancied superiority, and refusing to come down into the plain and join his efforts to those of all who are lovers of men and helpers with God. Nothing so inevitably tends to alienate the trust and affections of men from the representatives or ordinances of religion, and to beget an impression of their unreality and inefficacy. And nothing tends more certainly and irresistibly to justify all these worst prejudices and harshest judgments. For no procedure will so rapidly and infallibly empty the minister and his work of all their vitality and freshness, converting the man into a machine and the ministry into a venerable form of necromancy. If Christianity is to fulfil its mission by sweetening, purifying, and invigorating the life of the world, it must not remain secluded in

prayer-closet or in sanctuary, but must come down to the level of daily life, and let its influence be felt in the business intercourse and recreations of men.

You may be called upon to act on school boards and parish councils. You will almost certainly have much to do with various clubs and trusts and societies dealing with the secular affairs of the community. You will have to serve tables as well as preach the Word and administer the sacraments. And, provided you do not get too absorbed in these business affairs and neglect your more proper special work, it is advisable that you should get experience and work out your Christian principles in these common things and in these matter of fact duties. Your Christianity must be very little worth indeed if it does not acquire additional robustness and insight, and at the same time exercise a beneficent influence and make its presence happily felt in dealing with the material wants of men and the everyday business of the world. You will learn a great deal there that you need to know, both about men and about things. And you ought to be able to show your fellow-workers by your spirit and example that religion makes a man kinder, wiser, stronger, and better able both to understand and help.

And so, whilst you keep these lower interests in their right place and prevent them intruding upon your peculiar sphere, do not shun or taboo them. Take advantage of them to reach your people, to carry on your education, and to wed

Christian faith with the secular work and matter of fact business of life.

I think the same principle will lead you a step farther still. It will, *e.g.*, enable you to decide with some degree of safety and wisdom what attitude you should assume towards *the relaxations and amusements of society*. It is simply impossible to lay down a hard and fast line here, dividing in every case what is permitted and what is forbidden to the Christian minister. A great many considerations have to be taken into account, and the difference in the circumstances may completely alter the whole aspect of the case. But, speaking generally, where a Christian man can go without inconsistency and without injury, there a Christian minister may also go. Nay, it may be that there may be a religious obligation for him to go. He may feel his nature braced and his heart refreshed by the pastime; he may contribute the very restraining, controlling force that it stands in need of; and through his example and influence others may learn that hardest of all lessons—how religion may be reconciled with merrymaking—how men may laugh as well as cry, enjoy life as well as endure trial, in a Christian spirit.

I know no department of life that is in such sore and constant need of being purified, sanctified, and sweetened as its amusements and recreations. And yet there is no part that is more indispensable, and ought to serve a kindlier purpose. You will never succeed in banishing this

element out of the lives of your people. Nor is it desirable that you ever should. Rather aim, then, at directing those deeply seated tendencies into proper channels, and setting up Christ where the world, the flesh, and the devil are so often allowed preponderance, if not exclusive possession. You cannot render a greater service to the cause of God or to the welfare of man than by teaching them how to rejoice and unbend in a truly Christian way, to be merry and happy, and yet sin not, but rather glorify God. And if you want to do this effectually, you must not merely stand aside and lecture and warn them. You must join them and show them how it can be done. Only remember the motive must be pure and the spirit must be strong. It is a critical position, and a hard task. If you succeed, the reward will be great. If you fail, the result will be disastrous. See that you do not rashly undertake more than you can accomplish, and so hurt your own spiritual life and the consciences of others by what you enjoy.

There is still another matter, not altogether unattended with difficulty, in which the same principle may supply valuable guidance. I refer to the question of how far it is lawful or desirable that ministers should *pursue studies and give themselves to work that do not spring immediately out of or bear directly upon their proper ministerial duties.* How far, *e.g.*, may we safely and conscientiously carry our love for general literature, our interest in science or practical affairs? How

much of our time and strength may be fairly devoted to work and research lying in fields beyond our strictly ministerial province? On the one hand it will be generally conceded that, in order to replenish our knowledge, refresh our mind, and keep our nature healthy and vigorous, it is well, if not absolutely necessary, to vary our occupations and change our mental pastures occasionally. And, further, every one will acknowledge that not merely the individual minister himself, but the whole Church, will benefit by the culture, scholarship, and wider mental range that can be attained only in this way. There is only too much reason for the complaint that in our Church there is little or no room for lettered leisure, and that consequently the streams of learning are more numerous and wide than profound; and so we may well hail those few cases where, under many discouragements and in the face of many difficulties, the love of learning and the thirst for erudition assert themselves, and where the sharp, thin soil in this our chilly, unkind air brings forth fair, rich fruits of learned treatise or many-sided culture. The Church sorely needs such quickening and deepening of its intellectual life; and it is a serious loss to the Church if those whose gifts and powers of service lie in that direction do not find an opportunity and scope for following out their bent and rendering this important service.

On the other hand, it must be remembered that our ministers are not set over a parish and

endowed with a stipend in order to acquire learning or write books. Their first and foremost duty must always be to their parish and people. They have no right to sacrifice their pulpit or pastoral work to any more congenial studies. If they find from experience that they can not merely reconcile the two interests, but make the one contribute to the improved health and efficiency of the other, good and well. Both the minister and his people will be stimulated and fed, while the Church at large will greatly rejoice. But let him at the same time carefully see to it that no single soul is famished or any single duty neglected because of his passion for scholarship or his longing for public recognition. Learning is good, authorship *may* be good, but faithfulness to our special trust and loyalty to our Master in the care of souls are better still. There is no inborn antagonism between the two. On the contrary, they are in many a case valuable aids and helpmates to each other. But where their interests clash and they cannot dwell amicably together, the claims of parish and people must prevail. I hope that many of you will find that they can dwell together in unity.

I trust that you have been conscious of a tacit understanding which has been underlying all my words, that there is to be *no arrest or finality in the development of the minister's education or efficiency.* I do not know or recognise any point or stage at which he may sit down and take his rest, feeling that he has learned enough and done

enough, or thinking that he cannot or need not acquire or achieve anything new. If you ever feel tempted to think and act as if you had exhausted all your capabilities, and must henceforth move on in your gin-horse round of routine, hopeless of improving yourselves, your methods, or your work, you may well feel sorry and anxious both for yourselves and for your people. Even old machinery gets obsolete and worn out, and when human natures cease to grow and put forth new leaves the season of their fruitfulness is past, and they are very near to barrenness and decay. So long as you are true living men and helpful, efficient ministers, so long you will be growing, not necessarily, or even probably, in one single direction or in one department of your inner life or outward activity. Every stage of life has its own special crop and is distinguished by its own peculiar fruits. Spring, summer, and autumn in human development, as well as in nature's workshop, have all their characteristic products. And every position, with its repressive or stimulating influences, tends to create and intensify a certain type of character and capacity. But whether you live quietly and develop slowly amid the lonely hills and the gentle influences of nature, or feel and respond to the thousand intense forces that are constantly throbbing and pulsating in busy city life, you surely will not let the years pass by without gathering and storing some precious fruit from the fields of experience. You cannot sit time after time by sickbeds, or watch

the shadows of death creeping over old and young faces; you cannot be spectators or partners in the deadly struggle against sin or for the rescue of beleagured souls; you cannot have intercourse with men or look on at the tragedy of life, without getting some increase of wisdom, tenderness, insight, and awe. You will get to know your Bibles better; you will get to understand your people better; you will get to know yourselves better; and, above all, you will gradually get to have a better understanding and a clearer conception of the eternal conditions of all hopeful, effective work—of the infinite need of man and of the infinite mercy and power of God.

You will have sorrows and trials and disappointments, both in yourselves and through keen sympathy with those who suffer and fall. You will have your hours and days and weeks of depression and sense of failure. There will be many a dark season when you will come down from the pulpit bowed down with shame; when you will come back from your parish work with a feeling bordering on despair; when you will sit by your fireside and hear behind you the voices of bitter regret, and listen with shrinking fear to the ominous warnings of inevitable disaster away in the darkness of the way before. You will recall lost opportunities that will never return—lost souls that you did not watch and guard. You will have to face misunderstanding, listlessness, and bitter opposition. And often your hearts will be sad and sore because the fruits are so scanty and because

you make so little way. And the bitterest ingredient in all the bitter cup will be the dark suspicion that with yourselves probably lies much of the guilt and the blame. You will have times when you hardly dare to look the world in the face; when you fear to commune with your own conscience, and when your only prayer to God is that of the unfaithful servant for forgiveness. I do not hope or wish that you may escape those seasons of darkness and eclipse. On the contrary, I pray that each one of you may know something of the sinkings of the heart and the sad self questionings which must come whenever a man looks out upon life and his own poor achievements with opened eyes, and realises the ghastly difference between what he has done or tried to do, and what was once his fond dream and always his sacred duty.

You will also, please God, have days of thankfulness, hope, and glad experience. There will be times when you seem to descry some faint tokens of growth and can gather in some few fruits of your labours. There will come now and then glints of sunshine when God seems to be with you, and when your people's hearts seem to awaken and open to your appeals. I have no doubt you will gradually win for yourselves an amount of affection, respect, and trust on the part of your flock that will touch and awe and stimulate you, and which will far more than compensate for all the years of effort and for all the days of darkness. I cannot wish you too much of the joy that comes from the

consciousness that God's work is prospering, and that the hearts of your people are with you.

I am not sure whether I can even desire for you all a career of wide popularity and oratorical success. If God has given you the gifts which catch and retain the popular ear, and which enable you to move and sway the people's heart, may God add the further gift of faithfulness and single mindedness in their consecrated use. If so, thank God, and rejoice that he has equipped you for such wide and effective service. But remember, at the same time, that these talents bring with them their sore temptations and the necessity for increased self-watchfulness. You do not enter the ministry to make for yourselves a name and a fame, or to gain for yourselves position and influence among men, but that you may find a post, however humble, where you may do some good lasting work for Christ and men, and do it well, because you do it consistently with your own soul's health and your single-hearted devotion to a sacred object.

Some of you will spend the years of service which God gives you in quiet scenes, where the aspects of life are fair and the faces of men are all familiar. Others will be called to work in the roar of cities, or in the smoke of furnace or factory, where nature's face has lost all its beauty, and unrecognising crowds meet and pass you on the street. Others, again, may flit from charge to charge, and know from experience the advantages and disadvantages of town and country—of rural quiet and

restless rush of city life. You will find that each position has its own lights and shadows—something to thank God for, and yet something that brings with it temptation and danger. If the parish be small and the people few, thank God that you have not more souls to be responsible for, and that you have more time to devote to their welfare and to the development of your own nature. If the masses are huge, and the work threatens to overtask your powers, thank God that you are saved from the perils of mental torpor, and roused to vigorous intensity of life and effort by the strong pressure of necessity and by the imperative calls of duty. If you have sat in several schools and wrought in several fields, and so have learned more than some who have never changed their scene of action, be thankful that you have explored more of the land and grappled with more of the problems.

After all, it will not matter very much to the world or to the Church in the end whether you had many or few souls to care for—whether you did your work to the accompaniment of nature's sweet voices or of industry's discordant noises—whether you shifted your scenes of labour repeatedly, or grew old among those whose fathers and mothers you baptized. But there will be one question of infinite moment for you and all to whom God sends you, and that is whether you made the most of your opportunities, whether you were glad to prove your devotion and faithfulness wheresoever your Master placed you, and whether you quitted yourselves like men, not thinking of what the world would say

or what might have been more desirable in your lot, but of what judgment the Master passed, and what help you had rendered to weary hearts and burdened souls.

I thank God for permitting me to speak to you of what awaits you in the years that lie before you, and in the field where God will call and help you to work. I thank you for allowing me to offer you counsel, warning, encouragement, and guidance. I value the honour highly. I feel the responsibility keenly. I am painfully conscious of how imperfectly I have fulfilled my commission, and even how inadequately my words have expressed what was all the while in my mind and heart. I had wished so anxiously to say a word that might save you from my mistakes, and give you the benefit of my little experiences; that might make your way a little smoother and your hearts a little stronger; that might serve to render your ministry in our beloved National Church of Scotland a mightier and more blessed power or the common service of man in Jesus Christ our Lord.

And now that I have finished my task, I feel how far I have come short of my hope and my aim. I have left so much unsaid that I should have dwelt upon. I have doubtlessly in many a case betrayed the limiting influences of my own personality and my own experiences, and so failed to observe the due proportions and balance of my materials. And even when the thought of the mind and the feeling of the heart which struggled for utterance seemed to merit deliberate expression, in

many a case the light failed or the vehicle of expression dragged heavily. In short, I feel much as I have often felt, and as you no doubt will often feel, when the sacred day's service is over and the people are all gone, and you are alone with God and your own conscience in the little vestry or in the quiet study at home. I feel so sad and ashamed that I have not made more of a grand opportunity. I feel how much better I should have done and could have done everything now that it is all over. And yet I cling to the fond hope that kindly hearts and generous natures will recognise in my words the spirit that stirred, however faintly, within them, and find in them some help and stimulus for their great life's work. May they lead both you and me to think more habitually and seriously of the consecration that is laid upon us, of the privileges and responsibilities of our trust, and of the final reckoning, with its glad recognition or dread condemnation, that awaits us all.

May they thus stimulate and help us to be faithful, devoted, untiring — fearing lest by our remissness or indifference we hinder or wreck the good work, yet remembering, too, that the work itself, as well as the power and issues of the work, are not of weak, foolish, erring men, but of the Almighty, Allwise, and Unerring God.

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